Film Quarterly

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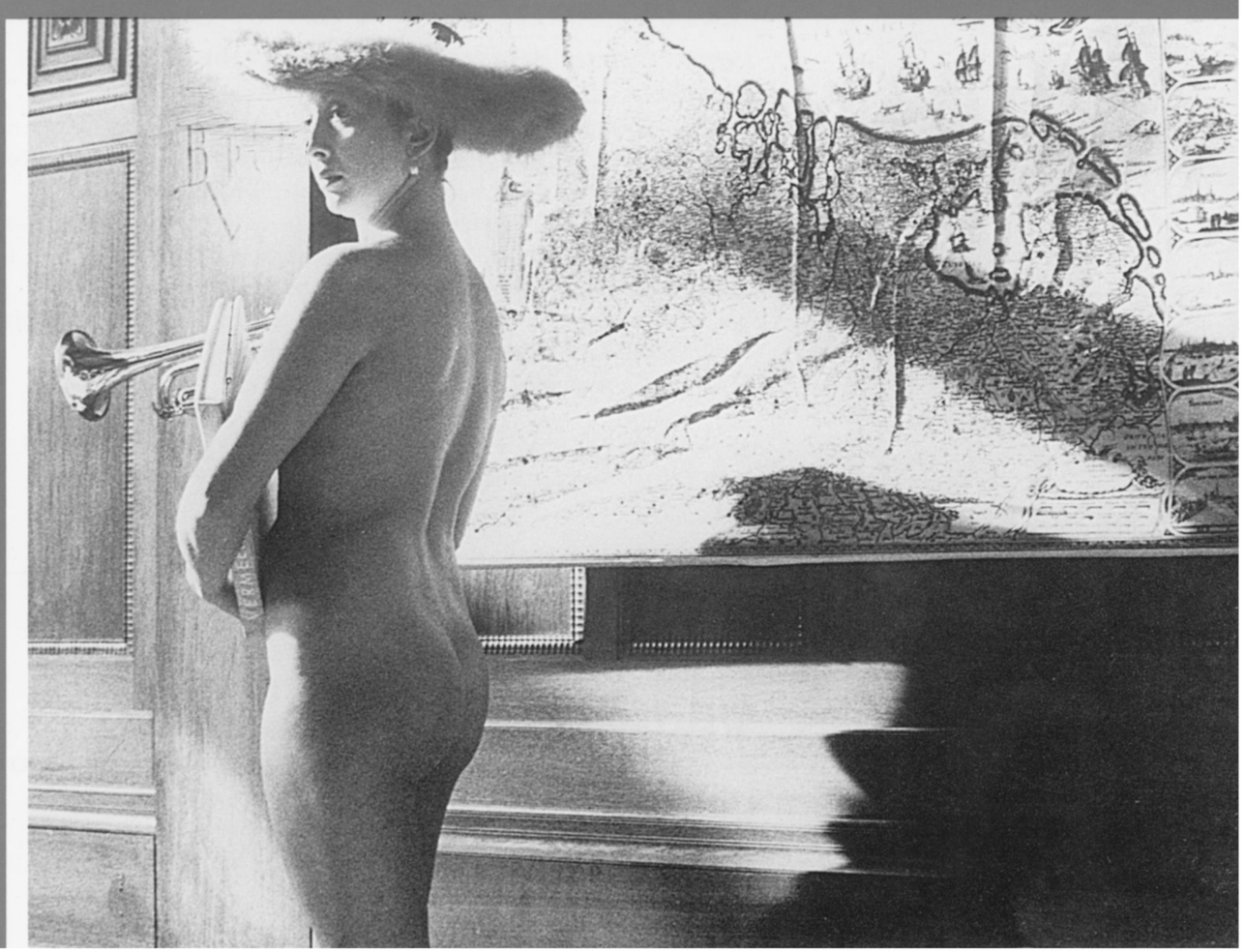

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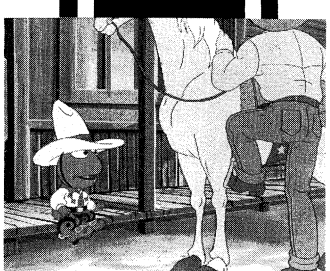

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Peter Brunette

Imag(in)ing

In attendance at last year's Berlin Film Festival was Holly Fisher, whose 1992 feature-length experimental film, *Bullets for Breakfast*, has been warmly greeted on the festival circuit this year but has yet to find an American distributor. The film was entirely produced on an optical printer, as were most of her previous, shorter films, clearly as part of a productive relationship with her work as a film editor (on, for example, the Oscar-nominated documentary *Who Killed Vincent Chin?*). Fisher has been working in films since 1965; her earlier works included political documentaries, which she gave up, she says, when she realized that they communicated only with those who were already convinced. Her succeeding films became increasingly open-ended and more forthrightly formalist. Since that time, she has made a film every year or two, though *Bullets for Breakfast*, her first feature, took four years to complete.

By means of the optical printer, *Bullets* provocatively juxtaposes—literally, through double and triple exposure—postcard images of women taken from the entire history of Western art with images of working women in a Maine herring smokehouse and some 8mm footage from John Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (uncannily marked with English subtitles, since there's no sound) that Fisher found abandoned on a back shelf of a hardware store on Canal Street in New York City. Sometimes the image is single, while at other times three or four different images may be superimposed over each other, thus greatly affecting the way we interpret them. Images are often beautifully revealed through the play of the light and dark portions of an image that is superimposed over them. The film also occasionally pauses for a perfect match between two images, as when the face of gunslinger Victor Mature is neatly placed over the face of the woman in Vermeer's *Woman with a Pitcher*. The opposition between movement and stillness is also an important visual motif that endows this film with the beauty of early Rauschenberg but with the added pleasure of dynamic motion.

Fisher also brilliantly exploits the potential split that exists in this and all films between the visual track and the sound track, and even when an interviewee is on screen and speaking, the sound is never synchronous. She also confounds the two tracks by often running previously spoken words across the screen, making them part of the graphic design and thus collapsing or reinventing the distinction between the figural and the written. The sound track of *Bullets* also becomes a field of clashing perspectives as the voice of a male pulp-Western writer, Ryerson Johnson, at first contrasts with that of feminist poet Nancy Nielson and then, as the film continues, grows remarkably close to her concerns. Near the end, the intensity is increased by having several voices on the track at the same time, thus doubling what has been happening on the visual track since the beginning, but also demonstrating how the two tracks differ in the conveying of meaning. (Heide Schlüpmann, the German film theorist, contributes a reading of selections drawn from what are presumably Johnson's stories, and the effect of a German accent reading these quintessentially American texts is simultaneously humorous and haunting.) Constantly returning on the sound track are the mournful tones of the fog horns that we later realize must have been part of the textual fragments of the Maine smokehouse footage.

Pictures: A Conversation with Holly Fisher

At first *Bullets* seems completely plotless, but eventually the voices begin to grow individual personalities, and the varying perspectives they offer develop, through their random juxtaposition, into a kind of postmodern narrative. High art is purposely confounded with popular art, and the eternal questions about the meaning of art itself are posed in witty and innovative ways. Though there is occasional evidence of a strong authorial intention (when, for instance, a striking juxtaposition seems just too perfect to have been accidental), for the most part the creative task of reassembling the film's fragments into some semblance of meaning, postmodern or otherwise, is left up to the viewer.

PETER BRUNETTE: *Could you tell me a little bit about your previous work?*

HOLLY FISHER: Well, even my first film presented multiple points of view, which I've always been interested in, especially in juxtaposing them. When I began making personal, experimental work in the early 1970s, this idea took on a formal aspect. In 1977 I made a piece called *Glass Shadows,* in which I dealt with the complexities of subject and object and the plane of projection. For about six weeks I shot a series of film-sketches involving early morning light, my—nude—self with Bolex in hand, and a pane of glass. In putting that piece together—the footage was very sensual—I could see that I could make a kind of sexy film with this, or I could exploit the pretty pictures, but I chose not to, and structured it to reflect the process that I had gone through in exploring this idea. The sound track is very minimal, a dripping faucet—it's a quiet film.

The following year I made a film called *From the Ladies,* commuting from my studio in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to a multiple-mirrored bathroom in the Holiday Inn in New York City. I wanted to make something cooler, but my images turned out to be very sensual without my intending them to be. I was attracted to this ladies' room—lined with mirrors and orange-flocked wallpaper—because of its contradictions: I found it an alien kind of space, yet one that was theoretically designed for me, being a woman.

I'm in both of the films and I was playing with reflection and with me as maker of the films and as object of the films being made and playing games with that idea. In *From the Ladies* you could see me scratching my head wondering what the hell to do next. Working/not working, active/passive, subject/object, that kind of thing.

Did these films have a feminist perspective, or did you come to that later?

Well, sure. I'm a woman trying to figure things out so for me they're feminist. I'm not sure what the word means today, and what you mean by it. My intention

here is to break down barriers, labels, pigeonholes that tie me down or limit my options. My point of departure is from a postfeminist point of view—as a woman in the 1990s trying to figure things out. Some of my early films were not accepted in some women's festivals because they weren't about menstruation or things like that. The people who were influencing me were people like Michael Snow, Steve Reich, and John Cage, but I pretty much went my own way. I've always wanted to explore the idea of power, how power relations are manifested in image and film structure. The project for me is how to shift the question of power to one of empowerment—for both maker and spectator. My films have taken more and more a nonlinear course—nonlinear, multilayered, and yes, open-ended. I really can't say if this is feminist or not.

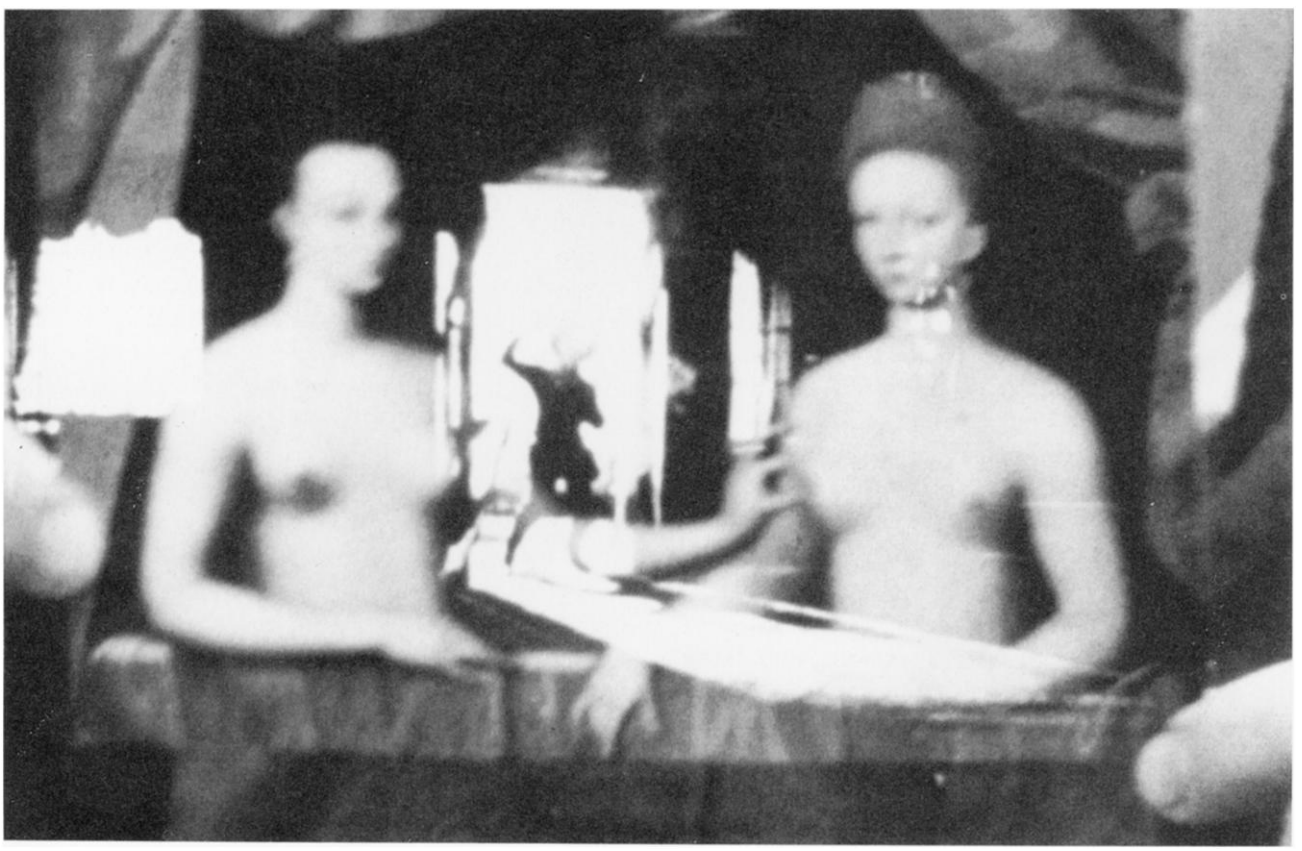
Bullets for Breakfast (see also opposite page)

Well, in Bullets, *there is the spectacle of the artist doing her thing, but there is also a strong analytical side to it, in terms of your display of the images of the female and the way she's been represented in Western art. I guess that's what I mean by feminism here—an explicit dismantling of Western, patriarchal representations of women.*

Absolutely. A feminist critique is my point of departure. At the end of his film, John Ford depicts Clementine standing rigid as a fencepost as she watches Fonda ride off through Monument Valley heading into his next adventure. A game I played in the making of *Bullets* was to see if I could transform this image of Clementine-as-fencepost into a flesh-and-blood woman, or woman as subject. And I've always been intrigued by the art/life split and what the hell that is all about. What is creative? Is there such a thing as a creative act? In *Bullets* I zeroed in on artworks that depicted women and I tried to look at them as though I had never seen them before, without worrying who painted them. There was a certain random aspect as to how I got those particular images, and that randomness enters into all of my work.

Why is this randomness important to you?

I always like to go where I've never been and that's the best way to get there, I think. I don't script what I



do, because if I script it I don't feel I need to make it. I like to keep the process very alive, to be on the edge of chaos as I work, not even knowing which postcard, in this case, I'm going to pull out next. It allows me to really respond to the composition. Each picture has its own ideology, and I was interested in seeing how I responded to that. And I find in *Bullets* that all the characters, male and female, are in a sense parts of myself, parts I like and parts I don't like.

I'm interested in breaking down these gender notions. To me, my pulp writer is more "feminine" than my feminist writer, who loves to chop wood and fetch her own water and live alone without electricity.

In what way is he more feminine?

He's very close to being a Zen monk, the kind of guy you'd imagine standing on his head and clapping his heels in the moonlight. He has no ambitions, he doesn't need to write the Great American Novel, he understands perfectly what he is doing and why. His favorite thing to do is to collect rocks off the beach. He doesn't own anything, lives in a very intuitive way, and writes whenever he feels like it. We share a distaste for ideologies coming from any direction.

I was struck by the juxtaposition of the more popular art forms with the more "serious." They seemed to be on an equal footing in the film.

That's also why there are images of Tienanmen Square in the film. I see all that material as artifact, and one of the many themes running through the film is the question of heroes and heroines and do we want them and do we replace Henry Fonda with a woman hero? May Ling, for example, was presented on American television as a hero and I brought her into the film a) because that was happening while I was making the film and I saw a chance to bring in current history, and b) to question whether this image was just one more in the rubbish heap of images. So I'm interested in this gap not just between high art and low art, but between art and real life, whatever that might be. Current history versus one's notion of history.

In my own theoretical work, I'm interested in the idea that the meaning of film images is always loose and unmoored, and only understandable in a given context or frame. The images you use may mean something totally different in your film than they did originally.

That's the essence of the project to me. And: if you put yourself in the center of that—how do I find myself in this crazy mix of tradition and image and nature?—is there such a thing as meaning or is it completely relative?

I'm also fascinated by the struggle in your film between social commentary on one hand and the very aestheticized images you put together. They're very beautiful, but, as you know, those two traditions are often seen as being contradictory.

That you can't have pleasure and ideas at the same time? My first answer is, Well, why not? Another answer is that by using juicy images it may cause you to pay attention! I'll look for any route I can find to draw the spectator into this game of participating. If the color red draws you in, or if a familiar image triggers some memory in you that connects to the film, any of those are fine as a handle, something to pull you in.

For me, it's all material at this point. It has meaning by what is next to it. I could imagine expanding into using real narrative. But only as one way to tell a story, set against something else. It's the difference that highlights that "life between" that I'm interested in exploiting.

That life between . . . ?

One idea and another perhaps, or beauty and meaning. There's a space between those, just as the film works as much by what's missing as it does by one frame next to another in the persistence-of-vision phenomenon.

Does your film attempt to redefine narrative? Is narrative a trap?

This film plays with various kinds of narrative—visual, poetic, linear. Ryerson Johnson, who tells linear stories . . . I also present his life in something like a vague chronology which maybe reflects how he works. Nancy is represented only in her poems and in fragments. I'm interested in expanding the idea of narrative; beginning, middle, and end makes no particular sense to me. I don't see the world that way. I'm interested in the notion of cycle.

After making my first documentary, and in the editing I do to make a living, the project is always how to get the viewer to feel involved, to feel responsible. I know very well how to cut conventional work, where the viewer identifies and projects and blah blah, and it might be a documentary for public TV and you feel very bad while you watch it and you might write a check [for a good cause] and then you go out for dinner. And the project is how to embrace the spectator into the project so that the watching is present—so that film isn't *about* something, it *is* something.

Do you mean "responsible" in a moral and ethical sense?

That makes me nervous, but it might be true. When I talk about trying to break down notions of gender or any sort of ideological notion that restricts one's freedom, I guess it's safe to say that I'm trying to present ambivalence as an idea. A tolerance for the gray space, as opposed to black and white. Being able to tolerate difference—that's where real choice is.

If your work has a social dimension to it, how do you justify choosing a form which is so anti-representation that the audience will perforce be very small.

[Laughter.]

I mean, it's the old Brechtian problem. If you want to have some impact, don't you have to be representational and have narratives and things like that?

I'm getting uncomfortable with the crusade line that is coming up here, because I'm not quite ready to get on that horse. And I have to say that even though this film deals with issues of gender and whatnot, it's still material for me. There are issues in my life and in the time that I'm working—and I use them as material. I think that the whole project for me is something closer to music. It's something to be felt. You can analyze it if you want, but that's not the thing that interests me the most. For me, it's something to do with the color and the rhythm and the whole package, the composite. I love the complexity. It's like playing three-dimensional chess in my studio. But it's the whole shape that excites me; the moral idea is not the center of it.

Do you then see yourself using this material in the traditional sense of artistic self-expression?

That's an aspect of it. Someone asked me if [optical] printing makes me more distant from the images. Actually I don't give a damn any more about expressing myself—isn't she a sensitive person!—it just doesn't matter. I'm interested in how to make me, you, the viewer, feel alive, how to key into that. I don't make pretty images so that people can say I'm sensitive, it's just something I do.

So how do you place yourself in your work as a person who naturally wants to express herself, but not in that "Look at me, how great I am" fashion?

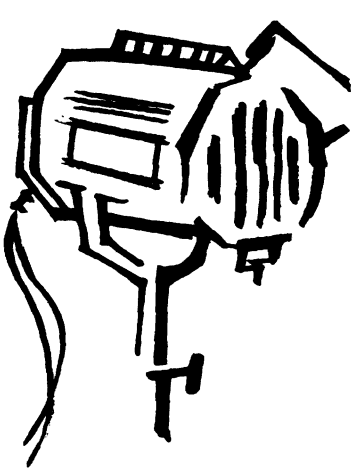
I'm obviously trying to find an alternative to that—call it male, phallocentric, what's the word?—that I think belongs to men and women since probably some definable point in history. But I'm not comfortable even with words like "intuition" because it gets put with women and Asians, and so on. I think there is a process of thinking and being that belongs to us all that needs to be validated in all of us. I need to validate it in myself because my head doesn't work the other way. I couldn't make a film until I stopped worrying about coming up with a story.

There's also a practical problem with your kind of film-making. You have to make it feature-length to get it shown and then how do you do what you're doing in feature length?

I realized in the course of making *Bullets* that I needed that length to let it all play out. I don't think it's intimidating. If you read the transcript, it's funny. I do have a secret hope of getting it into theaters, because I think people could enjoy it. No one knows how to watch this kind of film, but that doesn't mean it can't be watched. It takes work, and people aren't conditioned to work when they go to the movies. It's too bad that everything on celluloid is called film. There must be a way to present a film that is not precious, and not just shown in the back room of the Whitney Museum.

■ Peter Brunette's latest book is on Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player*, in the Rutgers "Films in Print" series.

[*Bullets for Breakfast* is available from Women Make Movies and the Department of Film of the Museum of Modern Art, both in New York City.]



Jean-Pierre Geuens

Visuality and Power

The Work of the Steadicam

The studio is finally silent. The makeup person rushes to the side. A quick exchange between the operator and the focus puller reassures everyone that the camera team is ready. "Sound," "Camera," "Speed," "Mark it." Everybody's attention is now riveted on the scene as the director calls "Action." The ritual then proceeds.

The actors surrealistically replicate the lines, gazes, and gestures they had been practicing just a moment before. At a precise moment, well rehearsed among all those involved, the grip weighs in and pushes the dolly ahead. As the heavy platform slowly reaches speed, each unit of the team performs the required action: a last step which positions the actor under the key light, the removal of a net by an electrician, a continuous reframing by the operator, a tricky focusing adjustment by the assistant, a swiveling of the mike by the boom operator, and a steadfast effort by the grip to keep the dolly moving at a constant speed. During this brief moment, as the silence grows heavy, a heightened fervor seizes the crew. It is as if the movement were experienced almost as religious: a procession where the camera takes the place of the sacred relic, the fog machine replaces the incense, and the participants are thoroughly spellbound by the communal weight of their action.

In this paper I will first quickly review the traditional applications of camera motion in the narrative cinema. I will then assert that the introduction of the Steadicam did more than just add another piece of equipment to Hollywood's arsenal, that, in fact, it significantly altered the visual look of films. I will strive to make clear what the differences are, and will conclude by linking the Steadicam effect to the post-modern syndrome in general.

Initially, camera movements were not easy for the so-called motion pictures. Tripod heads, modeled after still-photography designs, could not accommodate even a simple rotation of the camera. Still, in 1896, an intrepid Lumière operator positioned his camera in a gondola, using the latter as an advancing platform to show off the sights of Venice. By the turn of the century, several films displayed some rough reframing so as to contain actors who had strayed beyond their marks. A little later, deliberate panning became evident in various Edison films when, for instance, a character arriving in a car and entering a building off to the side was shot through one swoop of the camera. But by 1905, the true potential of camera motion was finally understood as different directors, in a number of short films, attached the camera onto a moving car made to precede another car containing the actors.[1]

The sense of motion, speed, and excitement was overwhelming, and with D. W. Griffith, who perfected all the kinetic possibilities of this effect in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916), this approach quickly became a vital and enduring leitmotif of the American cinema. Through the years, several generations of film-makers have managed to elicit even more exciting maneuvers out of the apparatus. Who can forget the restless flux of Abel Gance's camera in *Napoleon* (1927), Akira Kurosawa's breathtaking long

lens/fast pans combinations—a synergy that literally electrified the space in *Throne of Blood* (1957), or Richard Lester's no less jolting zoom effects in *A Hard Day's Night* (1964)? In these and many other films, the cinema unabashedly exploited a well-known cue from perceptual psychology (expounded by Slavko Vorkapich, among others), which stated that any motion in the retinal field would immediately engender a quick reaction in the eye and the ensuing attention of the subject. The greater the change, the more visceral the attendant response would become, with adrenaline being pumped, blood pressure increasing, and heart beating faster.

A quite different kind of camera movement was pioneered by F. W. Murnau in *The Last Laugh* (1924). There, the camera did not hesitate to take the place of the protagonist and openly give us his view of the world. The resulting image almost allegorically anchored the presence of the viewer in the text. Although much later it was determined that this exposure to the gaze of an Other never seriously challenged the homogeneity of the surrounding discursive construction, at the time the POV shot seemed genuinely revolutionary, suddenly opening the cinema to the expressionist and modernist techniques that were already a mainstay of painting, the novel, and the theater. To share the handheld point of view of the drunken doorman in *The Last Laugh* was to experience, even if only for a moment, the visual equivalent of the stream of consciousness pioneered by Proust, Joyce, and Woolf.

Finally, camera movement played an intricate part in what is most often described as the director's style. From Max Ophuls' precious arabesques to Stanley Kubrick's macho trucking, from Alain Resnais's steadfast forward motion to Miklós Jancsó's relentless stalking of people and places, the mobility of the camera became part and parcel of that ensemble we call mise-en-scène, the more manifest element of an author's style, his or her "calligraphy," as Raymond Durgnat called it. What the camera movement made obvious (especially in those shots not motivated by the progress of an actor that were for so long the bane of good filmmaking in Hollywood) is what Alexandre Astruc described as "the breach, that imperceptible veil between the work and the author by which the latter takes a stance in relation to it."[2] Viewers conscious of that movement could become aware of a dual set of references functioning on the screen: the diegetic world on one hand and the artist's effort to enmesh it through a web of his/her own making on the other. To quote Arthur C. Danto: "When this happens, the subject of the film changes; it no longer is the story [of diegetic characters] but of their being [photographed] . . . as though the story itself were but an occasion for filming it, and the latter is what the film itself is about. Film becomes in a way its own subject. . . . "[3] Here, then, camera movement functions as a most effective tool in the artist's arsenal, and technology is used to strike a tentative balance between one's sensibility and the resistance of the recorded material.

Sure enough, this balancing act cannot ever hope to resolve or harmonize the impossible nature of the act of shooting; it can only retain but a fragile grip over matter and but a temporary hold over time. The operation certainly cannot heal the ontological breach or disarm the Other, but for the viewer it can transcend, for a brief

hallucinatory instant, the banality, the anomie of an unrealized present. While this is potentially true of most shots as they make us experience a moment of time and enable us to refer to the present, contain it even, it is mainly the camera moves (dolly shots more forcefully than zooms or pans) that allow the spectator to encounter his or her own "durée," to use Bergson's expression.

As the dolly forges ahead, time is crystallized and viewers may become aware not only of the filmic drama that is being played out in front of their eyes but also, through the intentionality of the shot, of the presence of their own desire. This camera movement, Vivian Sobchack writes, "is perceived existentially and experientially as *bodily perception* and *expression*, as a *being* and *becoming* in the world, as *intending* toward that world or toward its own acts of being and becoming."[4] Here too, therefore, the classical motion of the camera helps foreground the ontological nature of yet another double event: a recording of an action which, in Morel-like fashion,[5] is fated to replicate itself in exactly the same manner time and time again, and our viewing of it in a moment that, we are made to realize, will never recur. As a result, still in Sobchack's words, the intentionality of the shot "links and separates our existence from that of others. . . . It makes us suddenly conscious of an implicit incarnation of an 'other's' consciousness both *like* and *unlike* our own."[6] The pain we ever so subtly experience emerges from the disparity between these phenomena and makes clear the separateness and the finiteness of one's life. What these principal characteristics of the moving camera—the ability to evoke point of view, present time, and directorial signature—have in common is their capacity to arouse viewers. And this, in turn, is what is lacking in the Steadicam.

In the early twenties, Murnau fantasized about "a camera that [could] move freely in space . . . go anywhere at any speed. . . . " He talked of this camera as a "fluid architecture of bodies with blood in their veins moving through mobile space . . . [an] interplay of lines . . . [an] encounter of surfaces . . . a symphony made up of the harmony of bodies and the rhythm of space . . . [a] play of pure movement . . . " that would come to pass "when the camera has at last been dematerialized."[7] Murnau's dream drew closer to reality when Garrett Brown introduced the Steadicam in 1976. Ed Digiulio, the Cinema Products' corporate chief who helped Brown bring the revolutionary design to the market, explained the contraption's advantages to the industry. He began by positioning the new device historically: "The desire for realism, the increasing use of location filming, the need to film practical interiors, and the creative need of both cameraman and director to produce new and imaginative imagery have all conspired to cause an enormous rise in the use of hand held cinematography over the past decade."[8]

What Digiulio was acknowledging here was the influence of the French New Wave and the cinéma-vérité school of documentary, which had spread to many foreign cinemas but had been acquiesced to only reluctantly by a Hollywood industry then in the midst of a profound cultural and economic crisis.

Paradoxically, while recognizing the sense of immediacy provided by the handheld camera mode, Digiulio nevertheless condemned its inherent lack of picture stability. To strengthen his position on the handheld style, Digiulio argued that its use as an expression of someone's subjectivity was totally false to the success of the human servomotor mechanism in automatically adjusting for the ups and downs of the body in motion. In other words, the Steadicam offered an image of motion that was physiologically truer to our senses than that offered by the handheld camera. It was therefore more "realistic."

Finally, Digiulio neatly culled out from the entire handheld effect the distinct advantage of having a single operator functioning quasi-independently on the set. The immediate economic benefit for the industry was evident: smooth, jitter-free camera movements were now possible without the use of cumbersome 450lb dollies and the time-consuming placement of tracks. The ease of the operation and the economic advantage quickly convinced Hollywood, which left the question of realism to theorists.[9] Beyond this, the bonus of the operation—its ideological surplus value—was to recapture for the American film industry the technological lead in the field. Henceforth, whereas the Steadicam would reflect the work of true professionals, handholding could once again be labeled amateurish. The success of the gear can therefore be found in its perfect accordance with the "aesthetic specificity" demanded by the industry.[10] With the Steadicam, Garrett Brown did more than just rein in the rebellious foreign cinema, he did it while remaining true to the Hollywood tradition.

Before examining what makes the Steadicam such a unique tool, it may be useful to pin down some characteristics of the "older" technology it professes to replace. As far as a handheld camera is concerned, what French film-makers and audiences alike responded to was its ability to reawaken a view-

ing subject made somnolent by the moribund *cinéma de papa*. To be effective, the handheld technique could not operate in a vacuum; it needed to be enmeshed within an assortment of other tactics aimed at generating a novel mode of address. Especially noteworthy was the association of handheld cinematography with location shooting. As the camera stuck close to the protagonists and followed them from room to room, from inside a building to the street, the artificiality of the studio was left behind—the grime of the "real" world paradoxically providing a breath of fresh air to jaded audiences. Beyond this, as the camera carried on one's shoulder inevitably caused a certain amount of mishaps, it supplied the production with a visual rush that was otherwise unavailable.

What was occurring, as the operator followed an actor, turning swiftly around a corner, and even running up a flight of stairs, was the recreation of some of the sensations experienced by a human being undertaking these actions. Physiologically, the changes forced on one's body by this quickened pace make themselves known instantly: the tone, frequency, and intensity of the ambient sounds reaching the ears take on an urgent modulation; the feet experience the pressure of forward momentum as one attempts to run around the corner; and, when one climbs the stairs, the body feels the strain through the pounding of the blood and the acceleration of the heartbeat. Although the handheld camera cannot reproduce these physiological reactions per se, it can—through its ups and downs, bumps and joggles—nonetheless visually echo the excitement that accompanies the physical endeavor. This, in turn, was "recognized" by the audience as more real, more alive.[11]

Digiulio therefore had confused two distinct phenomena: the human sensations associated with motion and the servomotor mechanism that psychologically corrects for operator's "errors." Although it is true that we do not sense our field of view go up and down as we walk, some visual equivalent seems nevertheless needed to conjure on the screen the richness of the other sensations we experience. Viewers therefore may be simply hypothesizing the visual disruption of the text through the light of personal memory. Finally, as the turbulent strategy brought to the very core of the film's discourse scars and defects previously associated only with a protagonist's POV, the new shooting style reflexively anchored the sense of film-making throughout the piece. This can be verified in a film like *Lucia* (Humberto Solás, 1968), probably the best example of the grand handheld visual style of 1960s cinema. Although the technique elaborated by François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard, among others, could easily be—and was—adapted by other national cinemas, Hollywood was reluctant to adopt a technique that required a radical departure in the way films were conceived. More precisely, it was noticed that when leaving behind the confines of the POV shot and overtaking the straight narrative, the handheld footage did not cut well with shots or scenes filmed more conventionally.[12] It is probably for this reason that, even when it externally appropriated the new stylistics, Hollywood did not feel quite at ease with the handheld style, preferring to limit its uses to scenes that depicted a lack of control, a sense of disruption or chaos, as, for instance, in *The French Connection* (William Friedkin, 1972) and *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979).[13]

As a motion picture apparatus, the dolly has a few significant idiosyncrasies. First, from the "rotambulator" of old to the modern Fischer, this machinery, not counting the weight of the operator and an assistant, is a heavy load for a grip to push. As a result, it takes some effort to get to speed, and should not go so fast that the grip loses control or comes to such an abrupt stop that the riders are thrown out. Thus the dolly shot is bound by its massive physicality. Its heaviness cannot escape gravity. It is yoked to the ground. Apart from a few significant exceptions, especially in the films directed by Max Ophuls, the dolly shot is customarily slow and ponderous rather than fast and light.

Second, although the platform can be pulled, pushed, or crabbed, there are still turns it cannot make, complex movements it cannot perform, and times when its tracks become visible to the camera. There is thus a predictability to its motion, and its practical use is finite: as the character exits the room, the dolly shot usually comes to an end. Third, as I indicated in the beginning of this article, it is difficult to achieve the coordination required of all involved in a tracking shot; it is thus time-consuming and expensive. Consequently, the dolly's use in film has usually remained the exception rather than the norm, the moment of grace that rekindles the crew's excitement after the humdrum monotony of endless shots and reverse shots. All in all, the limitative characteristics of the dolly anchor for the spectator the presence of human agents behind the operation just as much as the instability of the handheld camera. In these movements we more than meet the kind of cinematic confines recognized by André Bazin as important for the art.[14] In the words of Edward R. Branigan, who explicates Bazin's thought, "the very act of seeing—apart from what is seen—should be restrained by real

(left) Nestor Almendros setting up a dolly shot for *Billy Bathgate*; (opposite page) old-style camera movement, accordionist and all

conditions of vision."[15] The traditional technological constraints of the camera thus truly express an ethos of imperfect omniscience.

If the dolly possesses the sturdiness of a locomotive, the Steadicam responds to the demands of one's hands with the grace and fluidity of a jazz dancer. To understand what is happening in the visual field, let us first examine the design of the apparatus. To start with, we have the famed ability of the gizmo to make the camera "weightless" by displacing its heaviness onto a breastplate worn by the operator, a design change that also frees his or her hands. To actualize the benefits produced by this transference, the camera itself must, at all times, remain untouched by human hand. In fact, it is kept at arm's length through the use of a weight-counteracting, stabilizing, mechanical arm. As a result, the camera is effectively divorced from the usual tight embrace of the handler. The operator's eye is not on the eyepiece, but aimed at a little video monitor attached to the gear. Finally, attendant functions, such as zooming and focusing, are entirely remote-controlled, activated by an assistant.

Visually, the Steadicam duplicates many benefits of handheld shooting without the lack of stability inherent in the latter practice; indeed, to the crew, it can provide speed, flexibility, mobility, and responsiveness. And, of course, it can also energize the film with visual dynamism.

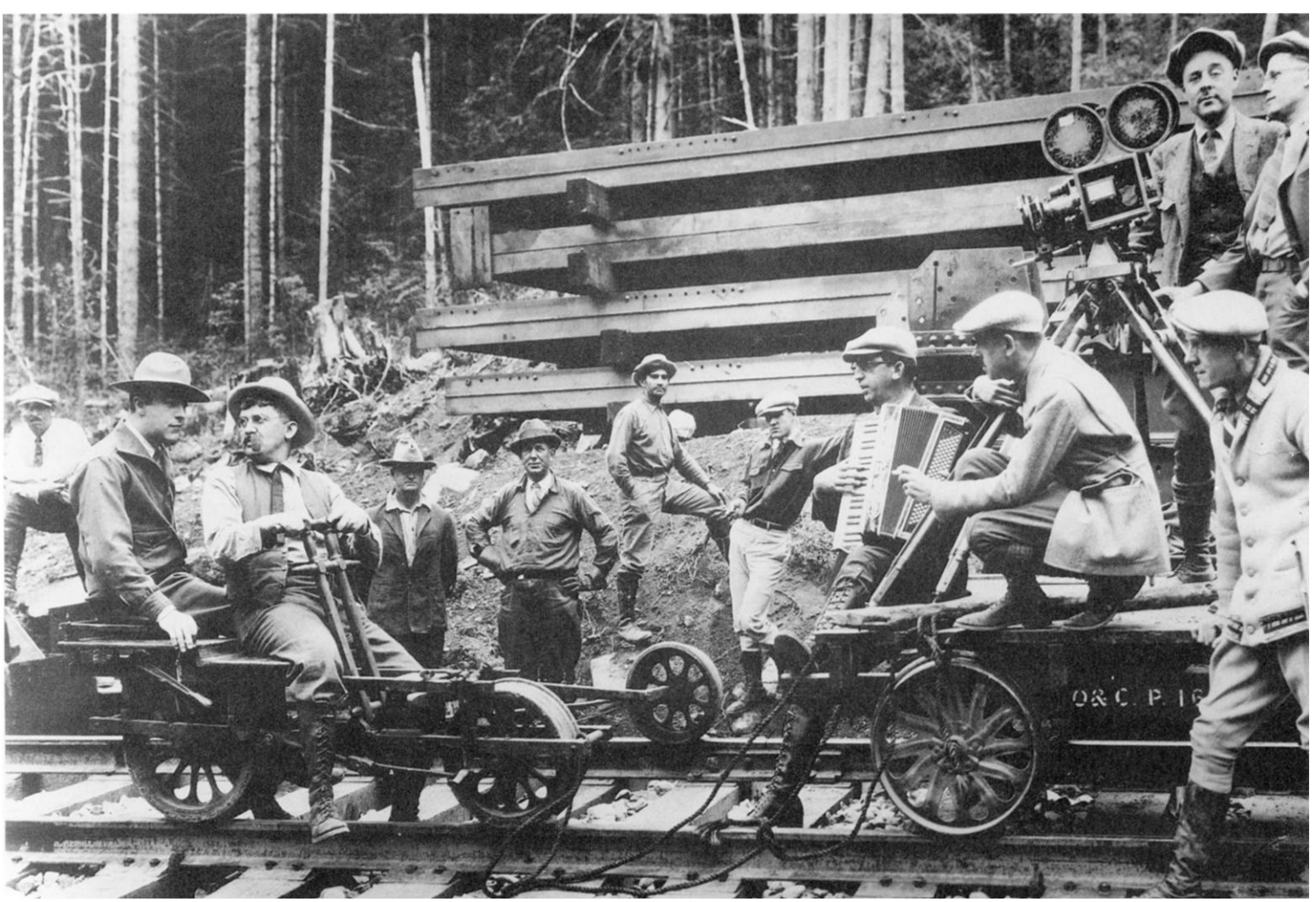
Let us briefly survey these attributes. Speed: to put on the hardware takes little time, allowing a good Steadicam operator to respond to a scheduling emergency. Flexibility: a director can easily incorporate last-minute adjustments between, say, take 2 and take 3 without major logistical restructuring, thus avoiding the wrath of the producer. Mobility: the system can be moved around actors even in close quarters, thus "opening" a scene that might otherwise be filmically listless. Responsiveness: a Steadicam operator can accelerate or decelerate quickly, altering speed to fit the dramatic demands of a scene. (A good example of this is Garrett Brown's own bravura performance in *The Shining*, when, at the end of the film, the camera leads Shelley Duvall up two flights of stairs: first she climbs quickly and the camera precedes her at the same pace, then, as she hears strange sounds coming from the floor ahead, she slows down, almost stopping, and the camera does a marvelous job at matching her change of heart.) Visual dynamism: in the words of Ted Churchill, one of the legendary Steadicam operators, "there is little that can match a wide-angle Steadicam shot in pure kinetic energy.''[16] A fair illustration of what Churchill has in mind would be, again at the end of *The Shining*, the shots when the camera rushes after Danny Lloyd and Jack Nicholson as they enter the maze.

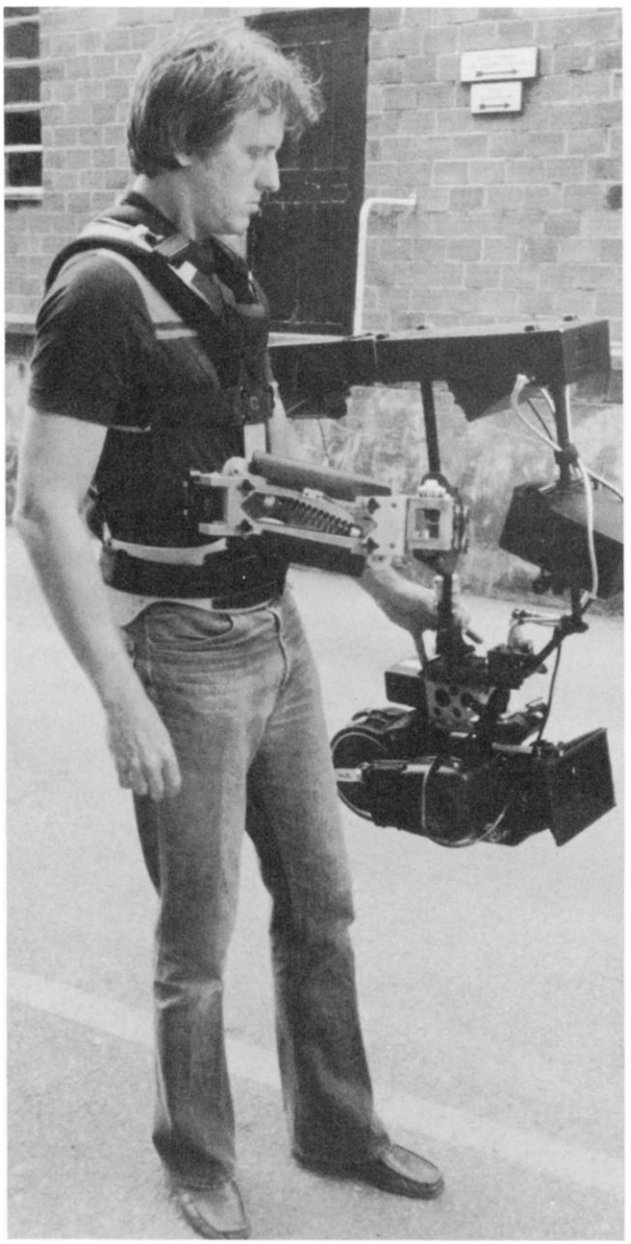
Whereas all of these pyrotechnics could, arguably, be performed equally well by a handheld camera, there

are certain moves that are unique to the Steadicam. First, because the gear can be used separately from its handler and hard-mounted on any vehicle, the apparatus can absorb all the jolts of a bumpy terrain while keeping up with a Jeep careening across the desert. Indeed, all the fast-action car chases we are now so familiar with are truly the by-product of the new technology. More precisely, it would now make possible the shot attempted by Orson Welles in *Touch of Evil* (1957), where he positioned Phil Lathrop handholding the camera at the top of a crane racing behind the car occupied by Charlton Heston and Janet Leigh.

Second, the system can provide new types of the combination shots that delighted even old professionals like Haskell Wexler. For instance, in *Bound For Glory* (Hal Ashby, 1976), a film photographed by Wexler, there is a shot that cranes down on a migrants' camp. As ground level is reached, the operator smoothly disembarks from the crane and follows David Carradine as he makes his way through the crowd. In this instance and many others, the shift away from the support system to complete independence for the apparatus cannot be detected. As a result, the Steadicam is fully capable of achieving the kind of encompassing mise-en-scène that Karl Freund reached for but could not quite carry off in *The Last Laugh*. Third, a Steadicam operator can follow or, for that matter, precede an actor literally anywhere: through a tight doorway, onto an elevator, around a sharp corner, or up a flight of stairs, all the while keeping any jerkiness from the image. The celebrated shot in *Rocky* (John G. Avildsen, 1976), where the camera dutifully follows the boxer as he trains on the streets of Philadelphia and races up the steps at the top of the hill, is a good example of this potential. Fourth, not only can the Steadicam go anywhere, it can push a shot to the limit of either the director's imagination or the operator's physical stamina.[17]

The logic of the system in fact seduces directors and operators alike into ever more complex variations of speed and pattern. In *Testimony* (Tony Palmer, 1987), the camera at one point precedes Ben Kingsley up a flight of stairs, into a series of rooms, makes a 180-degree turn along a balustrade, and then slides down the stairs again, all in one shot, with sync sound throughout and tens of actors and extras choreographed around the moving camera. In the title shot of *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (Brian de Palma, 1991), the camera records the arrival of Bruce Willis in an under-





Garrett Brown with the Lo-mode Steadicam on the set of *The Shining*

ground garage, leads him upstairs, boards an electric car that proceeds along a series of subterranean tunnels, disembarks with him, rushes along more hallways and corridors, briefly enters a kitchenette, dashes through more corridors, a lobby, finally ending its run in a press conference room. The whole thing lasts no less than three minutes and fifty seconds.

Although Garrett Brown, Ted Churchill, and others keep warning against the tendency to define the Steadicam's ethos through these bravura pieces, humbly suggesting that their work is best when indiscernible by the audience, they themselves revel in long descriptions of the difficulties they encountered and the feats they performed while shooting these kinds of scenes.[18] So, even though it is very often impossible to distinguish a Steadicam shot from one using a traditional technique, one can focus on other moments when its specificity (a constantly moving, floating camera) is foregrounded. It is this difference that I will be addressing in the rest of this paper.

The discontinuity with the past then seems to originate both with the complexity of the Steadicam's trajectory, that is to say, its excess, the facility that permeates the operation, and, to a large extent, with the lack of rationale for its use. To illustrate this characteristic pattern, let us look at the scene in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (Jim Cameron, 1991) where we are introduced to the scientist through a flashy display of Steadicam pyrotechnics. Although the nominal purpose of the shot is to acquaint us visually with a character who will become important in the story only later on, an inordinate amount of camera movement permeates the shot. The camera first focuses on a TV screen, then pans left and proceeds into a room full of people performing various experiments. As a messenger arrives, the camera pans right and moves ahead, accompanying him until he reaches the scientist. During a brief exchange, it rotates 90 degrees around the two men, then follows them through another part of the room, enters a separate enclosure, and pauses through another exchange of dialogue, after which it exits through a different door, turns left, and continues ahead until it finally reaches a locked steel door.

At stake in this practice is less a question of "good" or "bad" use of the Steadicam—whether its exercise is well motivated in one film or just a tour de force in another—than an implicit indifference toward what was once a basic tenet of the classical film language through which this kind of text still officially operates. How do we reconcile this headlong rush of visual activity with the traditional notion of the ideal invisible observer? The camera moves into the room independently of characters at first, and, when it subsequently accompanies them, the shot encompasses so much visual distraction that it is no longer possible to say, à la Ivor Montagu, that we are in the best possible position from which to apprehend their conversations and view their activities. In this case, the fly is no longer on the wall, it is in full flight, buzzing everywhere, always in motion. Visuality here thoroughly exceeds the demands of the scene.

In fact, what is proposed is no less than a different type of scopic regime. As a result, certain questions need to be asked: Who is now speaking, what exactly is being said, and why is the change taking place at this moment of cinema history? Could this hyperventilated flux be construed as a flamboyant display of discourse on the model of Welles in *Touch of Evil*—the flaunting of a master's technique? Unlikely, for this shot, and others like it, thoroughly lacks both formal and dramatic tension. With its fetishistic, "inordinate focus on arrangements rather than composition," the kinetic strategy could next be said to function more like one of those "colorative devices" criticized by Theodor Adorno, "that gave the impression of excitement and individuality'' to a base commercial product.[19] Indeed, the contemporary requirement for nonstop visual excitement goes a long way toward explaining what is going on. Even so, because the gaze is so relentless and so swooping, yet unmotivated in the sense that one cannot explain it through the use of traditional narrative or aesthetic causal agencies, the effect eerily superimposes over the conventional action a panoptic demonstration of pure visual presence. What is important here, therefore, is not so much what the camera shows us in any particular instance as its claim that nothing would escape its attention. Whereas the visual excess of a Miklós Jancsó, for example, continuously clouds vision and conceals knowledge, the quintessential Steadicam work dispenses with such reservation, reveling instead in spatial omniscience. This shift of scopic regime is further accentuated by the uncanny ability of the gear to float through space as if it were truly unfettered from gravity and materiality.[20] The embellishment on the screen, contrary to Digiulio, brings no personal recollection; not only is it creepy, it also leaves behind the force and subjectivity of personal enunciation.[21] Although the progression in space may parallel that of the dolly, the image created by the Steadicam feels synthetic, once-removed. Because of this, we are no longer able to witness the extraordinary undertaking of a camera that seems to question the denseness of the world while simultaneously reflecting the will and sensitivity of its director.

Indeed, can we imagine substituting the levitation of the Steadicam for, for instance, the long dolly shot alongside the latrines of an Auschwitz block in *Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, 1955)? Something about the suggestion repels: the entire gravitas of the scene would be lost. Jean Cayrol and Alain Resnais enlist the slow, determinate, carefully executed dolly movement to interrogate the palpability of the cracks in the concrete, conveying, through the intentionality of the motion, their concern with the very muteness of the photographic image and its failure to evoke but the phantom of an event that was then and is now still truly unspeakable. In other words, while the film-makers queried the distanciating effects of their camera, they nevertheless invested it with the power of their own questioning consciousness. A Steadicam, by contrast, would function as a tourist from another generation—respectful, but thoroughly incapable of interpreting the traces in the barrack or of questioning the failures of one's own memory. As a result, it would embody the clinical distance, the sterilized indifference that so frightened the French film-makers. The burden of the painful historical reflection would be replaced by mere externals, timeless surfaces without connotations.

To elucidate this essential difference between the old technology and the new, one must go back to an explanation of space given by Ernst Cassirer in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. In his analysis, Cassirer compares human, physiological space to abstract, geometric space. Keeping in mind that Alberti's formulation of a central perspective system is nominally based upon Euclid's axioms, we read:

> Euclidean space is characterized by the three basic attributes of continuity, infinity, and uniformity. But all these three attributes run counter to the character of sensory perception. Perception does not know the concept of infinity; from the very outset it is confined within certain spatial limits imposed by our faculty of perception. And in connection with perceptual space we can no more speak of homogeneity than of infinity. The ultimate basis of the homogeneity of geometric space is that all its elements, the "points" which are joined in it, are mere determinations of position, possessing no independent content of their own outside of this relation, this position which they occupy in relation to each other. . . . In the space of immediate perception this postulate cannot be satisfied. Here there is no strict uniformity of places and directions, but each place has its own individual quality.[22]

Alberti's visual construction, as a result, could not quite match Euclid's ideal paradigm. Willy-nilly, the Renaissance theorist was forced to acknowledge the presence of some human agency at the very core of the operation—a mode of address then novel in the field of art. Thus at its very inception, the scopic regime of the

Renaissance casually allowed a Trojan horse into its midst—insofar as the aloofness of the regime could, potentially at least, be defied from within.

In film, one such possibility allowed spectators to experience the transformation of space through the use of a mobile camera. Insofar indeed as traditional camera movements effectively reproduced the sensation of a psycho-physiological change in space—the field was not only breached, *it was in effect penetrated by an invading consciousness*—they empowered the reach of the viewer. But by disconnecting the camera from the operator, by making it float above the world, Garrett Brown expressly dispensed with the subjectivity that had "marred" Alberti's construction of *perspectiva artificialis* in the first place. As a result, Brown was at last able to fully activate Euclid's nonhuman, ideal geometric space.

The repercussion was immediate: although on the surface the world was still the same, its visual apprehension could no longer reflect the production or experience of a human agent. Leaving behind its empirical grounding, the perceptual field now generates what appears as pure, omnipresent, and objective visuality. In other words, vision seems to emanate from a notional point hypothetically constructed outside of space and time—a situation that effectively detaches what is known from any knower.[23] Consequently, the Gaze becomes all-transcendental. The technological change is therefore similar in importance to the shift that marked, in the fifteenth century, the move away from the rough texture of the tempera toward the smooth transparency of oil, a transformation, John Berger tells us, made necessary by the needs of the new bourgeois class to turn all things into objects of commodification.[24]

Today, with the Steadicam, visuality is commodified even further: the uncanniness of the gaze not only depersonifies and dematerializes perspective, it also perfectly embodies the recent transformation of capitalist technology identified by Ernest Mandel and illuminated by Fredric Jameson within a context of postmodernism in the arts.[25] In exactly the same manner that capital abandoned both the older, heavier machine-making factories and the reckless business tactics of the nineteenth century, replacing them with the new, purer, luminous constructs of the electronic and information industry, the film industry discards the technological relics of the past (the heavy dolly, the wild and uncontrollable handheld camera) for a gear that disembodies vision. As a made-to-order companion, the floating, impersonal, inhuman presence penetrates space, appropriating it for the decentered, transnational, postindustrial corporate state of the late twentieth century.

What is happening, when the Steadicam is used in the manners described here, is that it neatly excises human affiliation from the pictorial experience: it erases the scars, it gets rid of the brush strokes, it sterilizes the image, it decrassifies the picture.[26] Although Garrett Brown's contraption may have been successful at "de-materializing" the camera, thus meeting one of Murnau's stipulations for a perfect apparatus, what the design left behind was another, no less important requirement of the film-maker: the "blood in the veins." To the contrary, as a bloodthirsty vampire, the Steadicam sucks all life, all force, all guts out of the image, leaving it but a pale ghost, a safe, sanitized version of its former self—in short, the perfect tool for an oh-ever-so-cool Hollywood.

"Sound!" "Camera!" "Action!" The Steadicam operator moves ahead in pursuit of an actor, while all eyes on the set are turned to the side, listlessly glancing at the picture displayed on the remote television screen.

■ Jean-Pierre Geuens teaches
in the School of Cinema-Television
at the University of Southern California.

Notes

1. See Jon Gartenberg, "Camera Movements in Edison and Biograph Films, 1900–1906," *Cinema Journal* 19, no. 2 (Spring 1980).
2. Alexandre Astruc, "L'Avenir du cinéma," *La Nef* 48 (December 1948), quoted in Lutz Bacher, *The Mobile Mise en Scène* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), p. 229. I have slightly altered Bacher's translation.
3. Arthur C. Danto, "Moving Pictures," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1979).
4. Vivian Sobchack, "Toward Inhabited Space: The Semiotic Structure of Camera Movement in the Cinema," in *Semiotica* 41, 1/4, (1982), p. 320 (her emphases).
5. Aldolfo Bioy Casares, *The Invention of Morel and Other Stories from "La trama celeste,"* trans. Ruth L. C. Simms (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1964).
6. Sobchak, "Inhabited Space," p. 329 (her emphases).
7. In Lotte H. Eisner, *Murnau* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), p. 84.
8. Ed Digiulio, "Steadicam 35: A Revolutionary New Concept in Camera Stabilization," *American Cinematographer* 57, no. 7 (July 1976), p. 786.
9. Although the new technology could be said to respond to the "symptoms" (such as handheld shooting, location filming, etc.) that had rocked the European cinema, the

economic *intentionality* of the project nevertheless dominated its acceptance by Hollywood. On the difference between different types of technological projects, see Raymond Williams, *Television, Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), pp. 12–14.

10. On the connection between technology and Hollywood professionalism, see David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 251–54.
11. On the influence of newsreel photography in helping the equation between handheld shooting and realism, see Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History, Theory and Practice* (New York: Knopf, 1985), pp. 220–23.
12. This is a point made by Ted Churchill in "Steadicam: An Operator's Perspective, Part 2," *American Cinematographer* 64, no. 5 (May 1983), p. 42.
13. Check the richness of the handheld camera in *Visions of Light* (Arnold Glassman, Todd McCarthy, and Stuart Samuels, 1993). About its use in *Alien*, see Derek Vanlint, "*Alien* and Its Photographic Challenges," and Ridley Scott, "The Filming of *Alien*," both in *American Cinematographer* 60, no. 8 (August 1979).
14. Whereas Bazin's argument is framed within a context of personal ambiguity and/or moral humbleness, it could easily be recast in terms of differences between a reflexive discourse and an authorless story.
15. Edward R. Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema: A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film* (New York: Mouton, 1984), p. 203.
16. Churchill, "Steadicam," p. 128.
17. Under the fluidity of the motion on the screen lie definite physical hazards for the operators. Although the early horror stories of physical injury that plagued the use of the Steadicam could be assigned to inexperience, similar concerns continue to be raised by the practitioners themselves. For example, a large segment of Brooke Conner's article, "Steadicam Hits Its Stride," *American Cinematographer* 73, no. 6 (June 1992), is devoted to Steadicam safety.
18. "Ironically the greatest aspiration and reward for a serious operator becomes, by default, the undetectability of one's work." Churchill, p. 35.
19. Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: History of the Frankfurt Institute 1923–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1973), p. 190.
20. Consider, for instance, the shot where the Steadicam enters Room 237 in *The Shining*, how it moves effortlessly in space and glides over the three steps that lead to the bathroom. The shot is uncanny insofar as it does not look like Nicholson's POV, as the following shot would seem to imply. Kubrick, however, has the last word for, storywise, we are never quite sure whether, in fact, Nicholson ever entered the room at all.
21. I would therefore disagree with Vivian Sobchack, who sees the Steadicam as simply another filmic tool capable of expressing an intending consciousness. My point precisely is that the Steadicam is *not* embodied in the world and that its gaze far exceeds the vision and reach of an ordinary human being. Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 253.
22. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 2, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), pp. 83–84.
23. Hannah Arendt calls this phenomenon "the Archimedean point." In *The Human Condition: A Study of the Central Dilemmas Facing Modern Man* (New York: Doubleday, 1958), chapter 6, section 36. For an elaboration of Arendt's ideas, see Donald M. Lowe, *History of Bourgeois Perception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 163.
24. See John Berger, *The Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC and Penguin Books, 1972), chapter 5.
25. Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, trans. Joris de Bres (London: Verso, 1978) and Fredric Jameson, *Post-Modernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), chapter 1.
26. As with all technology, the Steadicam's potential exceeds the ideological effect I have tried to isolate in this paper. For instance, the technique has been correctly used to describe out-of-body experience in the Kubrick shot described above (note 20). And a floating menace impressively emanates from nonhumans in *Wolfen* (1979), *The Witches* (1990), and *Alien 3* (1992). Beyond this, used with subtlety and sophistication, the Steadicam could alter and enrich the reading of more conventional scenes as well.

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S. M. Whisler, Director, Journals Division, UC Press.

Victoria E. Johnson

Polyphony and Cultural Expression

Interpreting Musical Traditions in *Do the Right Thing*

It has been generally accepted that classical Hollywood films incorporate music in order to construct and maintain an audience of passive consumers to whom the sound track is usually inaudible or invisible.[1] In this model, film music exists to enhance the purported and desired seamlessness of the narrative (by covering over edits, and so forth). The conventional score is typically characterized by several elements, including a strong orientation to nineteenth-century European Romanticism, which prioritizes melody, lush sound, and full orchestration, and a frequent reliance on leitmotifs, which are variously associated with specific themes or characters. Music is used to orient and hook the spectator, from assisting in emphasizing visual cues to monitoring or manipulating physiological reactions to the film.

While studios of the 1950s promoted musicals as the ultimate fusion of new visual technologies and original aural spectacle in an attempt to reclaim the lost audience of the postwar years, the rock-and-roll films from the late 1950s on offered the same cinematic/sound feast as well as a new appeal to the youth audience or teen demographic market. The 1960s saw the positioning of popular rock music as a site of political and ethnic expression, while the late 1960s and 1970s saw previously subcultural forms of music (e.g., punk, reggae, and rap) infiltrate mainstream entertainment, including popular cinema.

Recently, as initially black, urban musical forms such as hip hop and rap began to be incorporated into and appropriated by dominant culture, rap films began to show up on the commercial screen (e.g., *Juice*, 1991, and *Menace II Society*, 1993). With the late twentieth-century proliferation of visual-aural media and media technology, audiences have to process and respond to an intermingling of video and audio phenomena on a level which exceeds classical, conventional film-music demands in the sheer amount of music involved and in the number of implicated musical traditions and references. (This is certainly not to imply that contemporary spectators are somehow more knowledgeable or sophisticated than past film audiences.)

Do the Right Thing: Radio Raheem (Bill Nunn, left) and Buggin Out (Giancarlo Esposito) and Raheem's prized radio

Music, History, and the Films of Spike Lee

Spike Lee's "authorial" position regarding music and narrative is uniquely oppositional (voicing black history within a traditionally white industrial context) *and* mainstream (promoting familiar black artists for commercial reproduction and consumption on a mass scale). From *She's Gotta Have It* (1986) to *Malcolm X* (1992), Lee's commercial film releases have been characterized by the use of multiple musical styles which connote black production, artistry, and history. While *School Daze* (1988) popularized "Da Butt" and used elaborate musical production numbers to debate "straight vs. nappy," *Mo' Better Blues'* (1990) chronicle of Bleek Gilliam's jazz career is overtly *about* music and performance. *Jungle Fever* (1991) uses several musical voices, although there is no overlap or intermingling among them: each musical tradition is assigned to a particular family of characters, while the film is dominated, overall, by Stevie Wonder's original songs. A biographical epic, *X* omits titles as markers of historical progress and instead indicates the passage of time through interludes of music by recog nizable black artists such as Lionel Hampton and Billie Holliday (and—by the closing credits—Arrested Development).

Lee is clearly conversant with classical musical use and narrative conventions. However, classical scoring and style form only one voice within *Do the Right Thing*'s (1989) multilayered text. Here, Lee manipulates convention in a traditional manner to orient spectators within the film-story. His departure from and expansion of traditional musical and visual expectations joins other musical traditions, such as jazz, the radio, and rap, with camera movement and visual design to visibly depart from the classical idiom. While classical techniques are apparent in the film, the overall effect of Lee's layering is one of challenge to those expectations and to invisible style.

Do the Right Thing arguably represents his most

coherent use of music as interactive with and an essential component of visual representation and thematic, political concerns. The preexisting popular music (by groups such as Public Enemy and EU) and scored sound track of *Do* work together in a process of continual clash and merger, not as discrete segments. Unlike the artists featured in *Jungle Fever* or *X*, Public Enemy and EU were known primarily within black, urban culture prior to the film's release—not as popular/mainstream. Finally, while *Do* is not overtly about music or musicians, it is Lee's most thoroughly musical film—a film which posits rap music and rap style as commercially embraceable by the mainstream although inherently politically oppositional. For Lee, black musical production reflects black history and politics—through popular musical and aesthetic styles—which can be produced, marketed, and sold to a mass audience through cinema.

"Rap Aesthetic" and Spectatorial Address

Before the opening titles sequence of *Do*, a solo tenor saxophone plays a mournful variation upon "Lift Every Voice and Sing" over the symbol of Universal Pictures. The screen then goes black for a split second before a splash of hot red colors reveals a woman dancing vigorously, in several different street settings, to Public Enemy's "Fight the Power." While the backdrop and her bright spandex outfits change, the actress remains centrally framed, as all cuts are made on action. Although this sequence has been criticized for its apparently narratively unmotivated music-video-like style and its objectification of Rosie Perez,[2] it is extremely significant for its foregrounding of an immediate, equivalent, and codependent alliance between the film's visual image and the musical sound track.

The opening sequence introduces *Do*'s rap aesthetic—a visual style which adopts the formal characteristics (including rapid cuts and shifts in framing, and references to multiple styles and genres from music video to direct cinema and from melodrama to documentary) and thematic concerns of rap music (especially as it is characterized by the "politicized" voice of black, urban males). The film continues to use nondiegetic and diegetic music together with ambient noise, silence, dialogue, and the visual image to create a play of competing and merging voices.[3] These voices, as in rap, "sample" or combine snatches of musical traditions which are historically and culturally associated with or coded as black American forms such as blues and popular soul music. Dialogical voices are primarily those of young urban African Americans. Here, even before the titles, and then during the titles but long before the narrative begins, an aural dialectic is at work: two black American musical traditions—historic/jazz and contemporary/rap—are juxtaposed within the same space.

Do uses music nonconventionally, or obtrusively, in order to complement its formal style and thematic concerns. The amount of music and blend of multiple musical styles is used in a near-assaultive manner in specific sequences of the film, purposely giving the overall viewing experience a quality of excess and spectatorial challenge similar to the rapid-fire address of rap's oral appeal. *Do*'s provision of space for the expression and competition of multiple ethnic and generational voices—although they are predominantly male—denies the emergence of any singular empowered voice. Potentially, then, the film is a "space of the vocal (oral ethnography, people's history, slave narratives) . . . way(s) of restoring voice to the silenced"—a description which also defines the terrain and aspiration of much rap expression.[4] Even if *Do*'s aims and accomplishments are not so ideologically suggestive, the film issues a challenge to the classic spectator, who is conceived as passive and soothed by music of which s/he is unaware.

The dialogical dynamism implied by Spike Lee's use of diverse musical traditions suggests music's active engagement of an audience which may or may not be culturally fluent in the vocal play of these texts. While the film's music *could* be heard only musically (or not in terms of its cultural associations), its invocation of musical styles which are distinctly grounded in predominantly black cultural experience challenges the spectator to actively position her/himself against or within those traditions—to be, in fact, overtly aware of the symbolically laden values of the music as a separate text in addition to its filmic-narrative value.

Lee's audience thus breaks down into knowing or informed readers who are culturally inscribed within or by the discursive power and social significance of particular musical styles, and other viewers who are challenged to become educated to an exchange of cultural voices which typically remain absent or silent from their sphere of cultural-ideological operation. Perplexed responses to the film's ending and the hypothetical space the multiple-voiced text provides would seem to indicate the fragmented subjectivity which is promoted in *Do*'s spectators, as continual negotiation of the different musical voices of the text is required in

order to fully engage the narrative.[5] Ultimately, it might be asked whether *Do*'s musical address calls for a new type of spectatorship or a reworking of classical cinematic reception away from a model of passive consumption toward a conception of active negotiation of preexistingly familiar (aural) texts, couched in an original (visual) context.[6]

I will argue here that close analysis of *Do*'s "polyphonic" approach to aural content—as it is coordinated with visual style—explains and illustrates the significance of Lee's assertion that it is his "most political film."[7] However, this assertion is examined through

Mookie (Spike Lee, right) and his employer's son Vito (Richard Edson)

and qualified by the fact that, for Lee, commercial popular cultural artifacts which are produced by blacks—here, explicitly music (the word), but also fashion (the image)—are *inherently* political, as they emerge from a position marginalized by dominant control of capital and communication.

Musical Traditions in *Do the Right Thing*

Two distinct musical traditions are employed to create symbolic meaning via their place in *Do*'s particular social-historical, cultural context. The first of these traditions is a romantic, American folk-inflected orchestral style which also incorporates jazz and blues music and instrumentation. Because of its thematic use in the film and by virtue of its mediated nature (Coplandesque orchestral to bluesy jazz combo), this tradition can be referred to as the "historic-nostalgic" style. The historic-nostalgic tradition is embodied in the original sound-track music scored for the film by William Lee, the director's father. It serves primarily as background music or underscoring but, at some points, it intersects with the second tradition—of contemporary, popular commercial music. This second tradition has two modes of expression within the film: rap music ("Fight the Power")—which is played continuously by one of the characters, Radio Raheem, on his giant "boom box"—and the soul and R&B records played by Mister Señor Love Daddy, a disc jockey on the neighborhood radio station, We Love Radio 108 FM.

For the most part, both the rap and soul strains of the contemporary/commercial tradition exist strictly as diegetic music, although there are scenes in which the music carries over from another context in which it is not explicitly visually linked to the apparatus producing the music. Part of the narrative significance of the film's source music is tied to the fact that all the songs have lyrics, some of which are more significant and audible than others. Love Daddy also presents a dialogic patter which flows in and out of and bridges these lyrical texts. The film employs the historic-

nostalgic tradition and the commercial-contemporary tradition to delineate geographic space (a block in the largely black urban neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn) and historical moment (i.e., the topicality of the subject matter and theme, in this space of race relations between African Americans, Italian Americans, Koreans, and Latinos), and to clarify characterization (both of and within urban black culture and generationally).

The Historic-Nostalgic Tradition

Universal Studio's press information which anticipated *Do the Right Thing*'s release described composer William Lee as "the noted bassist, composer and arranger of eight folk-jazz operas."[8] Folk-jazz is probably the best description of Lee's background music, which is included in almost 30 minutes of the 120-minute film. His nondiegetic score, structured by conventional folk and more unconventional jazz strains (ranging from low-key bluesy solos to virtual funk explosions), assists in *Do*'s complex interweaving of communal aspirations and ideals with the clash of generational and individual aspirations and intolerances.

While the stringy folk inflections complement the sense of history and togetherness felt by the residents of the block and suggest the time-tested wisdom of Mother Sister and Da Mayor's generation by repeatedly associating with them, the jazz strains, often associated with Mookie and Sal, suggest active, contemporary, struggling, and unresolved voices in the polyphonic work. As Marshall Stearns has noted, jazz, as a musical and cultural voice, is "'distinguished by an immediacy of communication, an expressiveness characteristic of the free use of the human voice . . . European harmony, Euro-African melody, and African rhythm.'"[9] The folk-orchestral and the African-American musical tradition of jazz represent voices which are, respectively and symbolically, one of status quo and nostalgic association (aligned with assimilation, passivity, and social acceptance) and one of continual resistance and assertiveness (aligned with exceptionalism, activity, and social change).

Composed for William Lee's Natural Spiritual Orchestra, the score's instrumentation puts a heavy emphasis on multiple strings, which is what most clearly lends it its folk tone. The Coplandesque composition of these underscored segments is evocative of such value-laden symbols as heritage, neighborhood, and community—reflective of a block which is, on the surface, a unified place. This sense of stability is reinforced by the composition's strict adherence to classic cinema conventions for background music, including the maintenance of mezzo-forte dynamics, an emphasis on tonal, resolving harmonic patterns and melody, and unobtrusive instrumental entrances and exits in which the musical line elides gently into the next scene or resolves to a quiet, dominant chord that fades imperceptibly into an edit.

Mother Sister (Ruby Dee)

The folk-style idiom exists, visually, "in the streets," or as a component of the community which integrates the spectator into the Bed-Stuy universe. It is used to introduce the neighborhood characters: Smiley, a young adult with cerebral palsy who preaches the words of Malcolm X; Sal Frangione, the owner of Sal's Famous Pizzeria, and his sons; and Mother Sister and Da

Mayor, the literal and symbolic old guard of the block who have seen its history and are wary of its future.

There are at least 16 significant occurrences of historic-nostalgic themes in the film. Two of these are associated with two of the film's primary characters—Mookie and Sal. Four out of five times, Mookie's theme is heard when he is outside of his workplace (Sal's Famous Pizzeria)—traversing the neighborhood on pizza delivery runs which require the camera to follow along, thus capturing the block's constant activity. This theme underscores Spike Lee's recurring concern with older and younger generations, their knowledge, histories, and differing responses to contemporary problems of race relations. It is present, for example, as Mookie acknowledges Mother Sister, the eyes and ears of the block from the older generation, and Mister Señor Love Daddy, who represents the middle generation. Sal's theme is associated with his pizzeria and his family, their history, and their current struggles as a Bed-Stuy business. These musical motifs establish a crucial theme regarding the interconnectedness of private lives and public space, or the inability of individuals to escape the neighborhood's gaze and judgment over private actions.

Da Mayor (Ossie Davis)

The historic-nostalgic score implies here that an idyllic community is realizable. Such a community takes heed of the knowledge of its elders and embraces the present with youthful enthusiasm. These themes are introduced in moments of placidity and neighborhood communication or in the context of family relationships and a discussion of social issues. Each occurrence is tied to expressions of the neighborhood's closeness as a community with an extensive history of people who know one another and literally watch over one another. These unifying themes are supported by the use of long tracking shots which enable visualization of the entire block (from within Sal's and outside) and establish the locus for the film's action.

Jazz, Heat, and Race

Do's characters, however, also are struggling with ever-present prejudices and biases of and toward those who are not like them (the Korean market owners and, eventually, Sal and his sons) or who are somehow separable from that same community. If the string-orchestral strains of music suggest a desired communal ideal, jazz strains in the score hint at a barely repressed undercurrent of turbulence and unrest, and imply the tremendous frustrations and simmering threat of violence.

The second entrance of Sal's theme, for example, takes place in a tense environment as he and his openly racist son, Pino, discuss the future of the pizzeria in Bed-Stuy as opposed to their home turf of Italian-American Bensonhurst. Pino becomes increasingly frustrated and violently animated, asserting his disgust with his life and surroundings. Sal, on the other hand, grows increasingly dejected in the face of such anger directed at his life's work. The voices from the neighborhood which are interjected here are those of the "corner men"—who sit on the street corner all Saturday, commenting on local activity—and Smiley, who approaches Pino and Sal to sell photographs of black political leaders.

The music in this sequence enters with a solemn, slowly descending piano line. This same melody is later picked up by a violin, then a cello, a soprano sax, and a group of violins. Next, with a strong undercurrent

of strings and ascending piano chords, the jazz section emerges. A solo soprano saxophone accompanied by a piano and trap set launches, with increasing intensity and higher pitch, into fevered improvisational runs.

Visually, Sal and Pino's scene is matched with the music in intensity and color. The sequence begins with a slow track from the back wall of the pizzeria to a two-shot of Sal and Pino, who sit at a front table. The opening track matches the slow piano scale and settles into a relatively static two-shot as both come to rest. From Sal's, however, external action is visible and takes place on several planes. The neighborhood is, in fact, ever-present and ever-visible (and, equally, ever-watchful of the pizzeria). The layered pieces of the jazz combo and the improvisation in this particular scene, then, act as companions to the action which confronts Pino and Sal from the outside and in some ways pries them apart, anticipating the tragic events to come.

Spike Lee's desire for the visual design of his film was that it would "look hot. . . . The audience should feel like it's suffocating."[10] The improvisational interludes Branford Marsalis interjects into folk-jazz sequences elaborate upon and intensify this effect. These passages evoke a fevered, aggravated play with chromatic intervals which translates into a sense of struggle and a lack of harmonic expression.

Rap Style: "In-Your-Face Explosive"[11]

As Tricia Rose's discussions of rap note, it is a musical style which is representative of both resistance and mediation. The "tension between rap's confining rhythmic patterns and its aggressive presentation potentially assaults," and the "end of the song brings relief"—especially for the white middle-class listener, who may feel threatened by rap's lyric and percussive demands. Rap is a "complex fusion of folk orality and post-modern technology," a form whose style and substance consist of compromise.[12]

If instrumental music expresses that which is not verbalizable in culture, rap is made even more potentially threatening by its basis in verbalization, or the word.[13] Rap, as an increasingly popular commercial musical form, is one for which "melody is clearly secondary to the primary interest. . . . [Its] songs . . . are incantations, chants which can correctly be seen as thematic variations on the question of power, racism, class."[14] Because of Western culture's proclivity to binarism and the polarization of spoken language and singing, rap's dialogic, rhythmic, linguistic structure, combined with its sampling of everything from former pop hits to television theme songs (or its pastiche form and overt political message and intent) combine to render it potentially disjunctive amid conventional musical forms.

Lee's choice of rap in *Do* as an inescapable diegetic element emphasizes his expressed political concerns and focus. His use of the rap music of Public Enemy presents a challenge to convention by insisting on spectator attention to its consuming presence, which drowns out any competing dialogue and seems to guide framing and camera movement. The rap qualities determine the filmic.

Do uses "Fight the Power" in ten scenes, including the opening titles. With the exception of this titles sequence, "Fight" serves as the individualized, personal anthem of Radio Raheem, a black youth who is visually and dialogically constructed as strong, quiet, and commanding. Generally, "Fight" is heard from off screen, immediately before Raheem appears. Visually, Lee has enhanced the notion that Raheem and rap are physically powerful and aurally threatening by using sweeping camera movements which start on Raheem's gargantuan boom box—exaggerated in close-up—and travel rapidly up his body to reveal his massive frame. Raheem is usually shot with the camera in a canted position and from a low angle, almost mimicking the position of the boom box itself and suggesting that the aural barrage of "Fight" sets things askew and assures Raheem/rap's dominance of any given scene. The song is used as a sonic assault—it enters unpredictably, at an unmodulated, uncharacteristically loud volume. It is intended to be obtrusive.

The aural explosion created by "Fight," reinforced by Lee's exaggerated camera angles, suggests that rap is a potentially totalizing aesthetic system. In the presence of the "word," one's worldview (via Lee's camera lens) is altered—or at least made alterable. Rap's association with the youthful Raheem, its aggressive political message (here), and its capacity to set the entire neighborhood at attention (aurally and spatially) imply that his generation of black youth is allied with change, in contrast to Mother Sister and Da Mayor's accommodationist stances. Significantly, however, Raheem himself is almost entirely silent. He does not speak the language of rap, he is "spoken by" it. Communication, for Raheem, is enacted by both the aural dominance of rap and the visual symbols of hip-hop culture. Raheem's knuckle rings and Nikes are part of a network of consumer goods which displace individual expression and re-present it via shorthand mate-

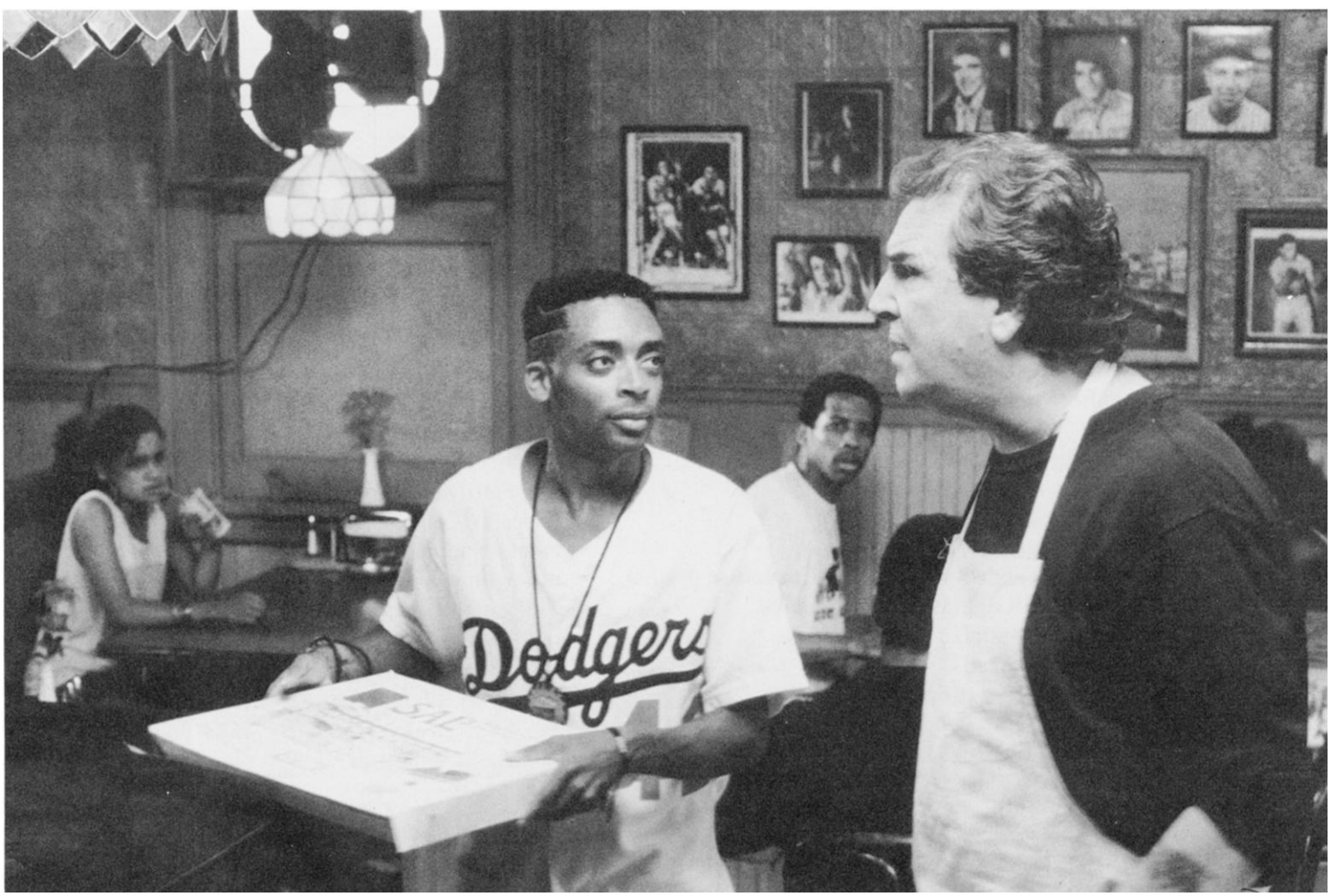
rial markers which are both representable to and understandable across a generalized social field (e.g., as connoting contemporary American, urban, black, male, youth—whether or not worn exclusively by such individuals).

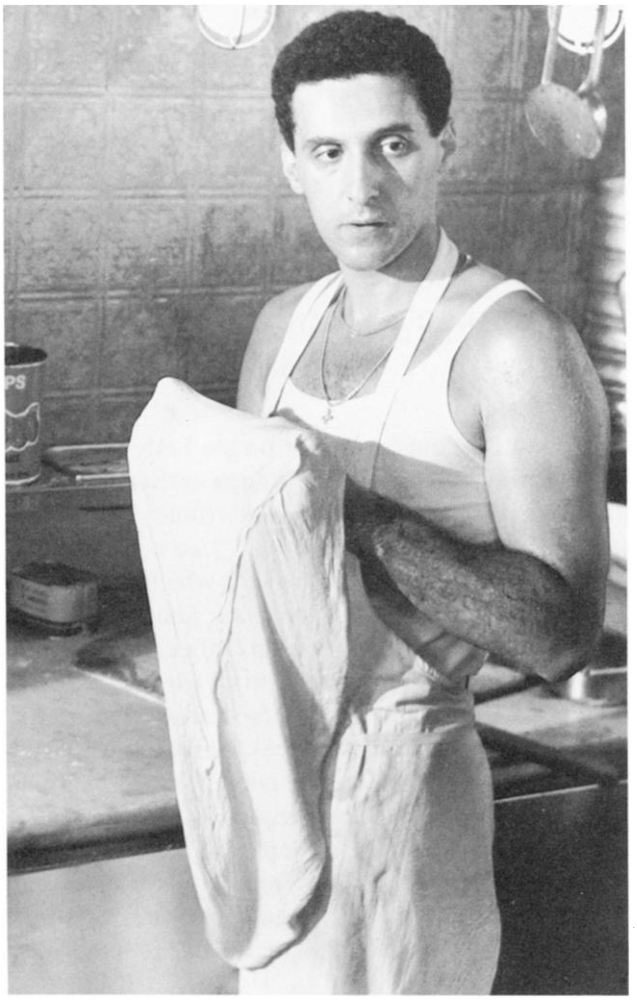
It should be noted, however, that one of the methods *Do the Right Thing* uses to promote audience sympathy for Raheem and to portray the complete senselessness of his death is to gradually render Public Enemy's tract familiar via its repetition. Overall, the spatial (noise pollution because of its unmodulated volume and its encroachment on silent space) and the verbal (politicized lyrics, in comparison to the surrounding environment; that which speaks the unspeakable) content of the song are, finally, rendered relatively nonconfrontational. While this familiarity, significantly, allows for the sale of Public Enemy's music outside of the film—as featured on the sound-track album—nonthreatening status is, equally, narratively conferred upon Radio Raheem, whose literal lack of voice throughout the film enables his image or iconographic status within the neighborhood to supersede his individual persona, thus promoting the film's heroization of the youth at the close of the narrative and into the end credits.

> "You come into Sal's, there's no music. No rap, no music, no music, no music. Capisc'? Understand?"
>
> Sal to Radio Raheem

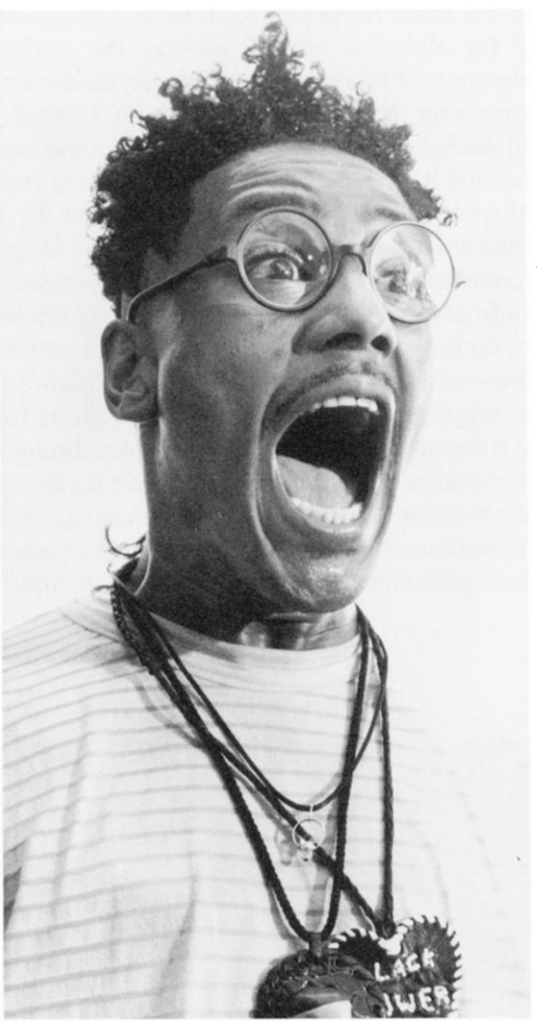
While "music can act on the body" and thus trigger emotional responses "through its rhythm (speed and emphasis of beat), its dynamics (loudness or softness) and its pitch (high or low),"[15] Lee uses overlapping dialogue and ambient sound, which frequently share these characteristics, to play "musical" roles. Sal's Famous Pizzeria is unique in *Do* because it is such a quiet site. On the six occasions in which music is used in Sal's, two are the unwelcome rap intrusions made by Raheem, three include entrances from or exits to the street—thus incorporating the neighborhood/external context—and two of these sequences are explicitly associated with Mookie's theme. Sal's "no music" assertion is, therefore, one which holds fast. In the pizzeria, expressions of racial and class differences or discussions of sociocultural conflicts are suppressed.

Sal (Danny Aiello, right), Mookie, and the pizzeria's Wall of Fame





(left) Sal's son Pino (John Turturro) and (below) Buggin Out



Buggin Out is thrown out for asking that there be "brothers up on this Wall of Fame . . . Malcolm X, Angela Davis, Michael Jordan" who would reflect Sal's clientele and its interests, as opposed to the photos of Italian-American celebrities. Sal's prominent display of Frank Sinatra's photograph, in particular, references a musical voice which is not aurally present but which is nonetheless visually and socially perceptible, thus contributing to the text's web of dialogical voices, voices which are portrayed as inadequate or even obsolete in contemporary urban America.

Radio Raheem's Public Enemy not only imposes music upon Sal's space, it also infuses the popular neighborhood hangout with unwelcome social criticism from a young, urban, black, male perspective:

> While the black man's sweatin'
> In the rhythm I'm rollin'
> Got to give us what we want
> Got to give us what we need
> Our freedom of speech is the freedom of death
> We got to fight the powers that be
> To revolutionize make a change
> What we need is awareness
> Power to the people, no delay.[16]

When Raheem first enters Sal's, he is shot from a low angle; Sal, behind the counter, is shot from above. Wide-angle lenses flatten Sal into his wall, while Radio Raheem's face is distorted and becomes ominously large and looming. These visual power relations are enhanced by the use of canted framing. Once Raheem voluntarily turns his music off—after Sal's screaming appeals (his world will not be challenged or altered by "that noise")—shots are framed from a neutral angle, at medium-long-shot distance. Visually and aurally, Raheem's music brings the current of tension at Sal's out into the open.

Raheem's final entrance to the pizzeria is accompanied by Buggin Out and Smiley as they come to

inform Sal of their boycott. The sound of the boom box precedes their entrance, which is again accompanied by a canted frame and shot from a low angle. As tensions rise in the scene and Sal breaks down to screaming racist invectives, he "kills" Radio Raheem's box by smashing it repeatedly with a baseball bat. From this point through the ensuing riot, killing of Raheem, and destruction of Sal's—a time-span of approximately 12 film minutes—there is no music on the sound track, only ambient noise and sound effects. The "silence" of the sound track at this moment (although it is filled with rioting noise) would seem to enhance—especially in light of the historic-nostalgic tradition's function—the film's tone of complete chaos and social breakdown. The spectator is cast in a participatory role by virtue of the absence of any music which would soothe the tension and violence. The audience is thus set on the same plane as the riot's observers and participants, by hearing only what they hear. Without any voice to comment on the action, the spectator's identification is set adrift.

Contemporary Soul Radio

If the historic-nostalgic and rap styles of music ostensibly represent opposite poles of convention, then Mister Señor Love Daddy's neighborhood radio station appears to serve as a bridge between the two, both aurally with regard to genre and generationally with regard to characterization. In accord with Eisler's and Adorno's idea that "music bears the sociological/psychological value of evoking the collective community," the radio station's "social function is that of a cement, which holds together elements that otherwise would oppose each other unrelated. . . . [I]t binds" neighborhood inhabitants together "into a community of listener-participants."[17]

The station is an organizing voice for the neighborhood because of the disc jockey's on-air narrative patter. Mister Señor Love Daddy's linguistic authority, together with the mixture of recorded music he plays, forges a loose connection with Radio Raheem's rap. Love Daddy's talk and his records also parallel the folk-jazz idiom in bridging edits and evoking a harmonious neighborhood environment.[18] His voice and music, emanating from each available source on the block, suggest his position as a mediator among polyphonically voiced audiences.

The contemporary selections the radio station plays reflect 108 FM's diverse neighborhood audience, from the a capella of Take 6, the dance music of EU, and the ballads of Al Jarreau and Perri to the salsa of Rubén Blades and the reggae of Steel Pulse. Thematically, apart from the suggestion that Love Daddy's omnipresence establishes the radio station as an object of communal understanding and discourse, 108 FM also serves an educational function. While Love Daddy voices his dismay about the racial differences and inanities which led to violence ("My people, my people. What can I say? Say what I can. . . . Are we gonna live together? Together are we gonna live?"), he equally heralds the richness of black culture in a rhythmic salute to a potential Wall of Fame for the community to truly call its own. This "roll call" is a voiced poetic collection of names such as Mahalia Jackson, Duke Ellington, Anita Baker, and Aretha Franklin, underscored by the folk-jazz music of William Lee. (Notably, most of these artists are Motown recording artists, thus referencing Berry Gordy's black-owned-and-operated business, artistic success, and "family" work-ethos, as well as indirectly advertising the sound-track album, which was produced on the Motown label.) The roll call is visually matched with a montage of the neighborhood's history, its old-timers, Mother Sister, Da Mayor, the corner men, and the patrolling police. Thematically, Love Daddy's dialogue here connects black cultural heritage and pride with the neighborhood's cultural heritage and pride. Lee positions Bed-Stuy as a microcosm of contemporary black culture.[19]

Do concludes with end titles that are introduced by Love Daddy's dedication of an orchestral piece to Radio Raheem which elides into the (recognized unofficial black national) anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing." Lee's presentation of balancing quotes by Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X parallels the opening credits sequence in the critical attacks and confusion it has drawn. Within the logic of the competing musical voices throughout the film, however, the quotes reinforce *Do the Right Thing* as a text of purposefully, unresolvably conflicting voices, each with committed desires and goals. King discusses the value of an integrated community of "brotherhood" in "dialogue"—an ethos which is symbolized in the film by orchestral themes and the older generation that holds the unity of the block/neighborhood family as the highest good. Malcolm X speaks to individual sufferings and disparities (the experiences shared by the community but felt differently by each person) in terms of the advocacy of violence in self-defense—an address which appears to be acutely relevant in the case of the young generation in Bed-Stuy, for whom dialogue has failed (Sal and Raheem literally do not speak the same language) and physical action is the only response left.

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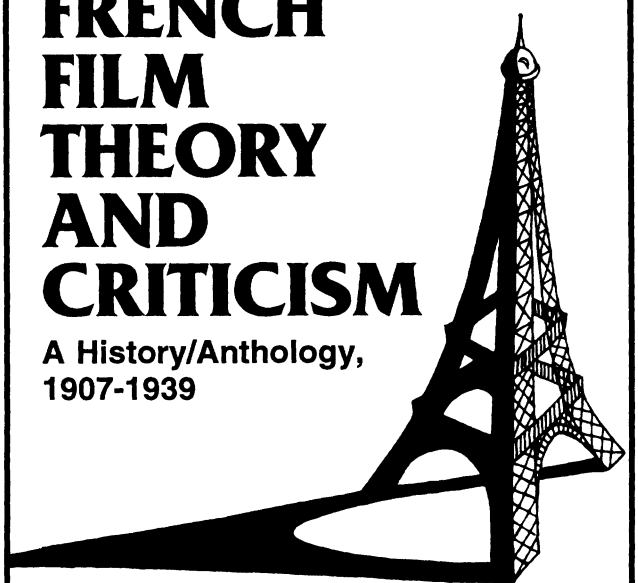

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Spectatorship and Commodity Practice

Do the Right Thing's indulgence in a rap aesthetic implies that the film threatens to reconstruct or to expressly confront the cinematic spectator with her/his act of listening/viewing and her/his reaction to the text. The fundamental aurality of *Do* combined with its hot look and camera movements conspires to create an address which is perhaps much further in its operation from cinematic suturing than it is similar to the affective, physiological response generally attributed to music *as* music or—and perhaps most provocative for further study—to the interpellative strategies of television as an "ongoing video collage."[20]

Certainly, Spike Lee's background in commercial and music video production often provides an opening for a predictably traditional criticism of his films which, negatively, suggests that his work has more "in common with Madonna than with Malcolm X."[21] Lee's "politicized" voice is most conflicted—in its calls for immediate racial and economic representation, recognition, challenge, and change—as his films grant expression to voices which are typically marginalized in relation to the mainstream only for those oppositions to be subsumed by larger commodification practices which recoup them for popular sale as black history and politics. Perhaps in spite of themselves, however, Lee's films may represent a provocative, positive fusion of a prolific, chameleonlike visual-aural aesthetic—a fusion which incorporates diverse youth concerns (in terms of response rather than generational affiliation) and plays with spectator activity and popular knowledge in an unprecedented fashion.

■ Victoria E. Johnson is a Ph.D. student in the Critical Studies Division at the University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television.

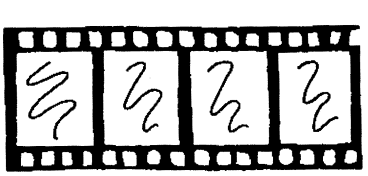
Notes

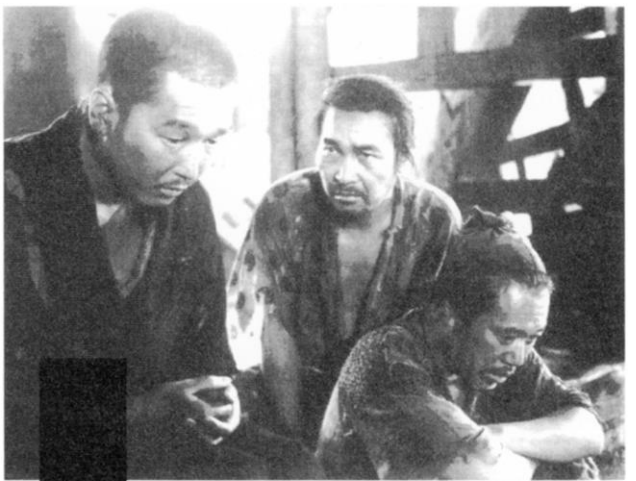
The author would like to thank David James, and also Marsha Kinder and Kathryn Kalinak, for their comments on and discussions of this essay.

1. Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 58, 75. Gorbman refers to "untroublesome viewing subjects." "Film music," here, includes both nondiegetic and diegetic music. Nondiegetic music—or what is conventionally conceived of as "sound-track music"—is that

which, Gorbman notes, is typically meant to be invisible. Diegetic music is audible to the characters within the film.

2. Stanley Crouch, "Do the Race Thing: Spike Lee's Afro-Fascist Chic," *Village Voice* (June 20, 1989). See, especially, descriptions of Lee's "luster of surface brilliance" and "turning of people into things."
3. Robert Stam, "Bakhtin, Polyphony and Ethnic/Racial Representation," in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, ed. Lester Friedman (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991), p. 262.
4. Ibid., p. 256.
5. See, for example, David Denby, "He's Gotta Have It," *New York* magazine (June 26, 1989), pp. 53–54.
6. Lee's films in general would seem to support such an inquiry. I would argue that many films of the "New Black Hollywood" movement of the 1980s and 1990s challenge traditional subjectivity aesthetically and through aural content and style.
7. Spike Lee, *Do the Right Thing* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), p. 21.
8. Universal News Press Release, 1989.
9. Quoted in Simon Frith, *Sound Effects* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), p. 16.
10. Lee, *Do the Right Thing*, p. 2.
11. Kenneth Turan, "Lee's Fury in Control in *Fever*," *Los Angeles Times* (June 7, 1991), p. F19. Turan's assessment of *Do the Right Thing,* as contrasted to *Jungle Fever.*
12. Tricia Rose, "Orality and Technology: Rap Music and Afro-American Cultural Resistance," *Popular Music and Society* 13, no. 4 (1989), pp. 37, 38.
13. Ray Jackendoff, *Consciousness and the Computational Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).
14. Wheeler Winston Dixon, "Urban Black American Music in the Late 1980s. The 'Word' as Cultural Signifier," *The Midwest Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (Winter 1989), p. 229.
15. William Johnson, "Face the Music," *Film Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (Summer 1969), p. 3.
16. Public Enemy, "Fight the Power," Def Jam Records, Inc. (CBS, 1989).
17. Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, p. 40.
18. Stam, "Bakhtin, Polyphony," p. 25. As Robert Stam's analysis of Bakhtin notes, while the "visual organization of space . . . is a metaphor of exclusions and hierarchical arrangements . . . the concept of voice" and, by extension, music, "suggests a metaphor of seepage across boundaries which . . . redefines spatiality itself."
19. Portia Maultsby, "Soul Music: Its Sociological and Political Significance in American Popular Culture," *Journal of Popular Culture* 17 (Fall 1983), p. 54.
20. Jon Pareles, "How Rap Moves to Television's Beat," *New York Times* (January 14, 1990), Section 2.
21. Bernadette D. Soter, "Letter to Editor," *Los Angeles Times* (June 7, 1991), Calendar, p. 79.





Akira Kurosawa and Intertextual Cinema

James Goodwin

In studying cinema as complex as the work of Akira Kurosawa, argues James Goodwin, recent ideas about intertextuality provide a more helpful paradigm than traditional notions of auteurism. He draws on contemporary theoretical and critical approaches to explore Kurosawa's use of a variety of texts to create cinema that is uniquely intertextual and intercultural.

"Akira Kurosawa has had enormous impact on cinema throughout the world, just as international culture has influenced Kurosawa and Japan. This is the first book that attempts to link his work to trends and issues that cut across national boundaries and transcend immediate historical circumstances. Extremely well written, well considered, and provocative, it moves Kurosawa's cinema out of its strictly Japanese—or Japan-America—context and into the realm of international culture where it belongs."—David Desser, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

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Craig D. Reid

Fighting Without Fighting

Film Action

"Why is it that the American film industry, with all of its better equipment, better trained personnel and superior film budgets, can't produce an original and creative fight sequence?" As the only Chinese-trained American fight choreographer working in the United States today (most recently as the fight director on a 1993 New York City production, *Blood Red Lipstick*),[1] I am constantly asked this question by my colleagues in Asia. It may be an egotistic and demeaning comment against American action filmmakers, but it is nevertheless an inquiry worthy of discussion.

Reflect for a moment. What is the difference between a saloon fight from an early Western and the barroom/nightclub fights of the current "tough guy" films? Nothing. Each sequence utilizes the same ideas: breaking chairs over backs, smashing glass bottles on heads, wrestling on the ground with strangling choke holds, rolling down a staircase, and crashing through a glass window or door. Some fisticuffs laced with a few simple kicks may occur along the way.

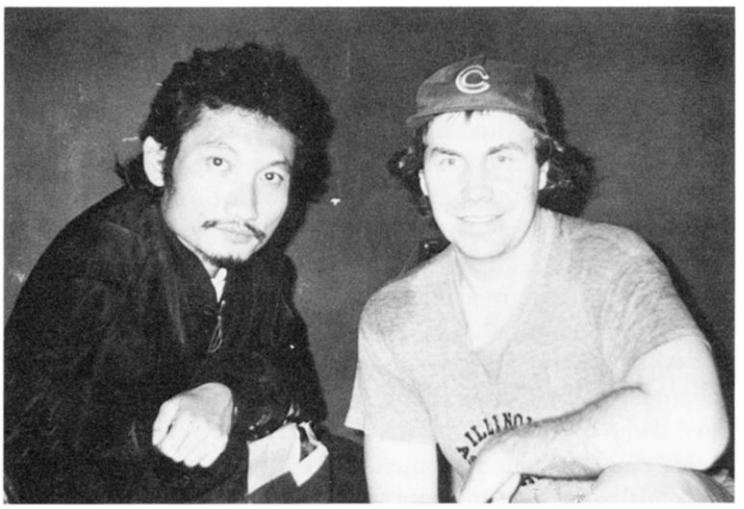
Why have the well-documented martial-art stylized action fights promoted by the Chinese movie industry always been in the forefront when it comes to development of action fight choreography? The answer lies within the industry itself.

Chinese film has been creating eloquent martial-art style fights since the Wu Xia Pian (martial-art hero films) of the 1920s. In these films, the heroes could fly, fight with supernatural martial-arts skills, control weapons with their minds, and shoot "death rays" out of their hands. It wasn't until the late 1960s, when such films became known as Gung-fu Pian (kung-fu films), that the movies' characters and fights assumed a more realistic tone and the protagonist's skill levels were more believable. Bruce Lee in *Chinese Connection* (1972) and Jackie Chan in *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* (1978) elevated the Gung-fu Pian to new heights—and provided the impetus for countless imitations.

In the 1970s, Shaw Brothers financed the creation of the "neo-hero" films, known as the Guo Shu Pian. Liu Chia Liang, a well-known director/choreographer, is credited with the inception of this new concept of fight choreography, which eloquently mixed the old-style Wu Xia Pian with the popular savvy of the Gung-fu Pian, as can be seen in one of his classics, *The 36 Chambers of Shaolin*.

Then, in the 1980s, Jackie Chan introduced a new genre of film known as the Wu Da Pian (fight films using martial arts), which combined athleticism, martial arts, and dangerous stunts. However, the latest change in choreographic methods is the fantastically conceived fighting approach created by Tsui Hark and featured in what he calls his "costume action drama" films, such as his *Once Upon a Time in China* and his "Swordsman" series. His novel approach to the Wu Xia Pian utilizes incredible fight sequences that are enhanced by the introduction of elaborate aerial acrobatics using wires to suspend the actors, sharp editing procedures, and a flurry of camera angles that rivals the originality of the old Hitchcock films. Tsui has been dubbed the Steven Spielberg/Alfred Hitchcock combination of Asia.

John Woo, who started off as a kung-fu director, broke the mold by replacing swords and knives with bullets. His current Hong Kong films attempt to break away from Jackie Chan's Wu Da Pian style. However, in Woo's first American film, *Hard Target*, he astutely utilized the marginal abilities of Jean-Claude Van



Craig Reid (right) with director Tsui Hark

Fight Choreography

Damme (not his first choice for the main character but intended to appease the American audience). *Hard Target* is Woo's worst film so far, but it was still a reprieve from the usual action picture seen by American audiences.

Despite the dynamic changes in action fight methodologies constantly being created by the Chinese film industry, the American industry remains static, still throwing the same old punches.

The first lesson I learned in 1979, working as a choreographer with Shaw Brothers and China Television, was that fight scenes must be entertaining. We relied on imagination rather than on any attempt to reproduce real-life fight situations. American stunt coordinators, however, try to stage "real-life" fights even though most of their sequences are borrowed from karate training drills, and end up reflecting fairly subjective assessments of "reality."

Say you have a man fighting seven attackers inside a large house. An American stunt coordinator, who doubles as the fight choreographer, will have the hero stand in one room and let himself get surrounded. Each opponent will attack uni-directionally, one at a time, with extended pauses between each technique. Many of the attackers will let themselves get hit four or five times in a row without trying to move away, while the other attackers watch their buddy get pummeled. This is typical of Chuck Norris's films.

Given the same scenario in a Chinese film, the hero runs, jumps over furniture, constantly throws kicks, punches, and even household items, and even though he does often get hit, he still continues to run and punch. By the end of the fight he is nowhere near the room where the fight started. Which situation is more real?

American martial-art actors insist that they are actors first and martial artists second, which is probably why a star has fewer fights as he becomes more well known. The demise of the American martial-arts movie star follows a predictable path, and Chuck Norris, Steven Seagal, and Van Damme have all traveled it. Their first films were their best fight-choreographed works: Norris in *Return of the Dragon*, Seagal in *Above the Law*, and Van Damme in *No Retreat, No Surrender*. As their popularity and paychecks grew, their number of fights dwindled, the use of guns increased, and the choreography became poorer.

In Hong Kong, the actors are actors first, and martial artists first. They blend both attributes so each complements the other. They have a passion for fighting *and* acting. One film will be a love story; the next film will be filled with fighting prowess.

Most of the top Hong Kong action fight directors are graduates of the rigorous training of Chinese opera school, where they learn a wide range of impressive acrobatics, skills with weapons, and different Chinese martial arts.[2] Chinese film has always used a splendid mix of flips and intricate weapon sequences. American films that attempted to incorporate acrobatics into their

fights, such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the new *Batman* films, usually created awkward, out-of-place sequences that never really blended into the fight's natural flow. The flips were slow and performed by doubles who would end their "floor routines" as if they were in a gymnastics competition; sometimes off balance with raised arms, as if expecting the judges to give them a score. (In Chinese film it is considered essential to land into an elaborate martial-art stylized stance and immediately continue the fight.)

An action fight director on a Chinese film is always accompanied by a string of assistants. One of these will have come up through the traditional kung-fu school ranks, thus assuring authenticity with creativity. Another will usually be an opera student or a trained fight choreographer who has adapted martial-arts skills to film-making.

American film-makers, however, use stunt coordinators and martial-arts teachers as their "choreographers." Stunt coordinators learn some karate, so their choreography is a blend of two-or-three-step sparring drills and barroom-brawl tactics. Martial-arts teachers' fights appear more "artsy," but they often utilize techniques similar to those used in the classroom, which again negates originality.

Producers and directors of Chinese film evaluate their choreographers' performance based on the inception of new choreographic techniques, originality, creativity, and the "apparent" skill levels of the actors. Top choreographers often pride themselves on taking a star with little or no prior martial-arts experience and making him/her look like an expert martial artist. Good choreography and long hours can produce characters on screen that have good "apparent" skills.

Most American fight scenes are scripted by the screenwriter, director, or stunt coordinator, with little room left for any changes. And without the opportunity for spontaneous or last-minute changes, a fight becomes a prearranged, robotic series of movements, immune to extemporaneous inspiration. In Chinese film, the choreographer is told to create the fight just 5 to 15 minutes prior to filming. Although elaborate stunts are carefully planned in advance by the choreographer and director, action fight choreography is based on the choreographer's ability to invent original sequences at a moment's notice.

Although creativity and originality should be the most important virtues in a fight choreographer's arsenal, over the years a stereotypical repertoire of choreographic methods has been developed, along with an elaborate system of acronyms to describe them. Working within the boundaries of these methods while remaining flexible and aware enough to break the mold when necessary, Chinese choreographers have learned to extend the limits and create new ideas. The American industry, however, chooses to remain within the constraints of each method, thus ensuring creative stagnation.

Fight sequences fall into three categories: MAMs (Many Against Many), OHMs (One Hits Many) and Triple Os (One On One). MAMs and OHMs truly test the choreographer's and actor's capabilities. For MAMs, the extras are usually grouped into pairs and instructed to perform familiar two-man punch-block-kick routines learned from previous martial-art training. If the extras are untrained, they are told to move around, waving their arms and legs heedlessly in the air while trying to intermittently make contact with each other. In this situation, MAMs appear unstructured and quickly give the fight scene a disorganized flavor. However, it is assumed that the audience will focus on the main characters whenever they are present in such sequences. This might be true, but if a choreographer wants perfection he will take time out to show the untrained extras simple routines that they can perform over and over while moving in circles.

When stars are involved in MAM shots, they can be fighting against one or against several opponents. A MAM is easily sold when the star has superb skills, because the audiences will ignore the background and focus on the main character. An actor's ability is truly tested during a MAM, when he must focus on thwarting one of several attackers yet still convey to the audience that he is aware of all the others. A choreographer can accomplish this by having the star blindsided by several attackers without breaking or even impeding the rhythm of the fight.

The OHMs require that an individual actor be well trained and the attackers have either impeccable timing or a lot of guts. During an OHM the actor must react to each attack without hesitation. It is easy for an actor to get sloppy, so the stuntman must either time his reaction to the kicks and punches perfectly, or let himself get hit.

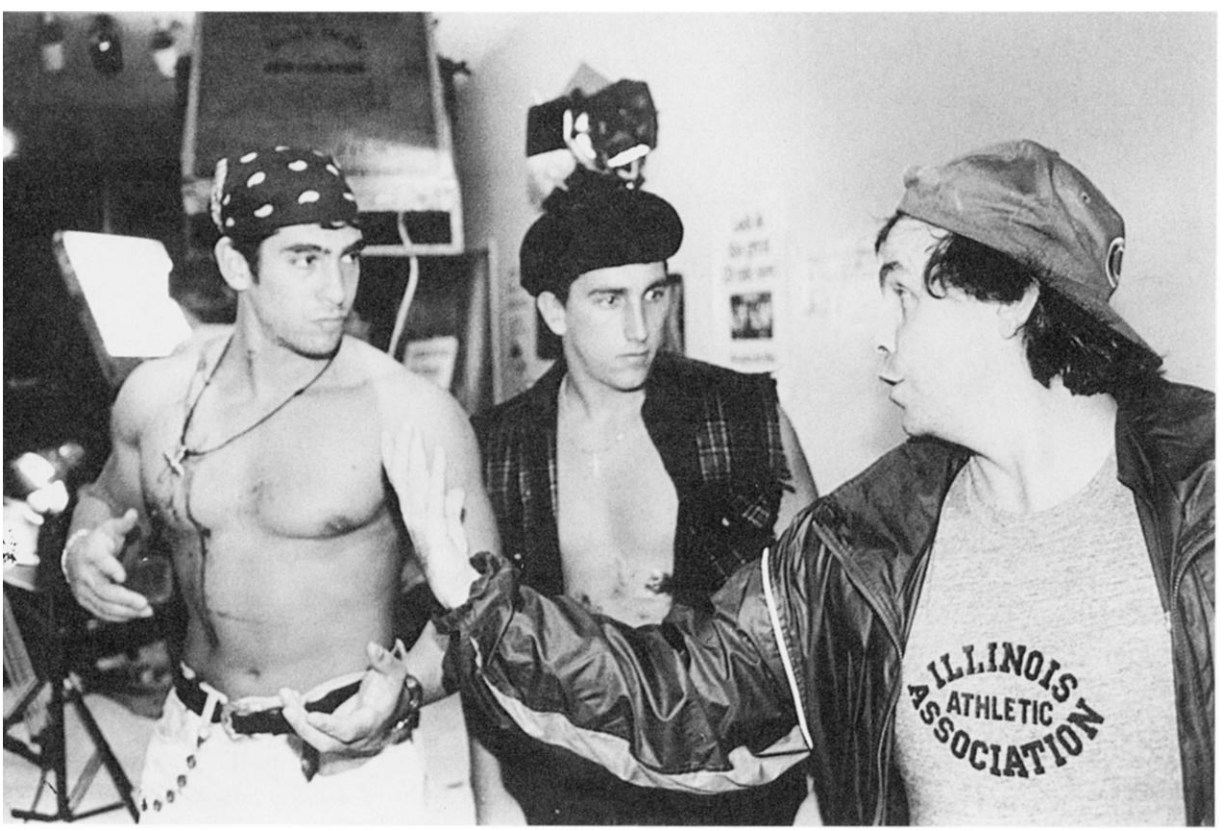
American films use a simplified version of an OHM, where each attacker is faced one at a time. Current Chinese films almost exclusively use the difficult version of the OHM, where each opponent is faced without any hesitation between attacks. In his second film, *Chinese Connection*, Bruce Lee was the first actor to kick nine different attackers in one smooth

uncut sequence and look plausible. In fact, it was more than plausible. Several of his attackers were knocked unconscious during the sequence.

However, advances in editing techniques can give any film the effect of a successful OHM. This is accomplished by using a series of close-ups of each attacker getting hit, and then editing these shots into the master shot. The true challenge for the choreographer is to accomplish an OHM within one shot without relying on camera angles and close-ups. An OHM that relies on excessive editing merely reflects mediocrity; a passionate choreographer will draw on martial-arts skills rather than fancy camera work.

are really one kick shot from four different camera angles and edited together into one sequence.

For a BEE, close-ups of the same strikes are then shot. The middle frames of the close-up shots are edited out while the beginning and the end of the strike's movement are spliced together. Hence the name "Beginning-End Edit." An individual BEE clip can also be repetitively used and edited together in rapid succession, then placed inside the MSSQUE sequence to further enhance the feeling of speed. The end result produces choppy sequences like the twitching special effect observed in the "Max Headroom" videos. From my years' experience in the Chinese industry, the

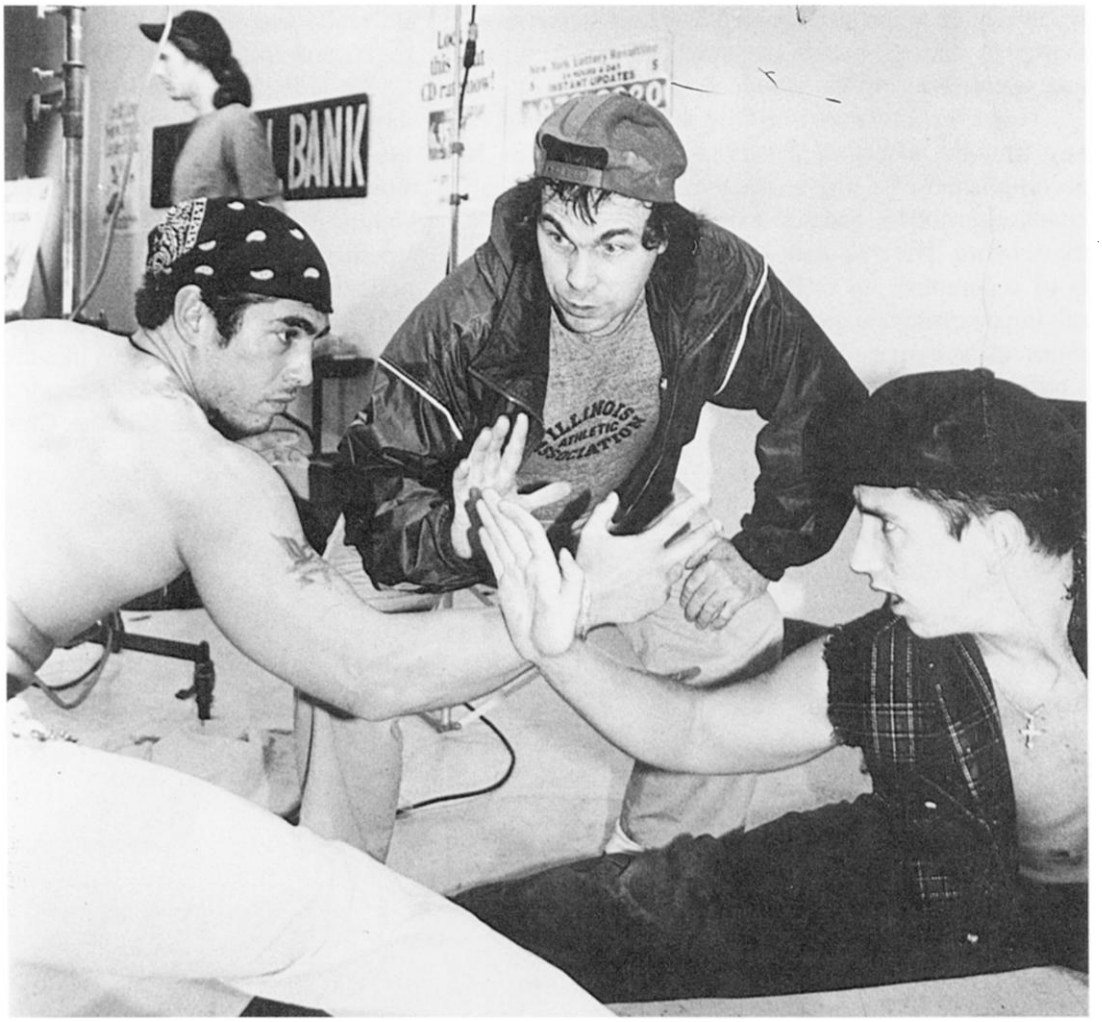


The fight director at work: Craig Reid on the set of *Blood Red Lipstick*

There also exists a subset of choreographic techniques that can be used within any of the fight categories mentioned above. Currently, the two most popular choreographic techniques used in American-made fight sequences are the MSSQUE (pronounced "miscue") method (Many Shot, one Strike, QUick Edit) in combination with the BEE method (Beginning-End Edit). The MSSQUE sections are shot by first filming one or a series of several techniques from three or four different cameras simultaneously. These shots are edited together to give the illusion of speed. So the four kicks that an actor uses to strike his attacker

overuse of these methods usually indicates that either the choreographer is trying to make an actor look better than he really is or the main actor doesn't want to spend time doing elaborate fight sequences. (Van Damme's films consistently feature this suspect method of choreography. However, in *Lion Heart,* the MSSQUE was used ad nauseum, producing boring and repetitive combinations of poorly chosen striking techniques.)

The SAC method (Strike At the Camera) is the most commonly used technique and was brought to prominence in the United States by Bruce Lee's first film, *The Big Boss* (1971). An actor either punches or



kicks up close and directly into the camera, as if he were actually striking it. The individual receiving the strike is then filmed jumping away from the camera. (Bruce Lee in *Return of the Dragon* enhanced this effect by having the cameraman shake the camera, thus producing the feeling of actual contact.) Because of its simplicity it is difficult to ruin this concept; however, Wesley Snipes, in *Passenger 57*, succeeded. Snipes would look directly into the lens, but his kick would veer off to one side of the camera. It is a small error, but the whole effect of kicking into the audience is lost.

The SAC method was never intended to be used as part of a film's choreographic persona; it was originally created to be used when actors were unavailable for a shot, as a fill-in, but American film-makers have a tendency to overuse it. This, in essence, reflects the complacent attitude so common among many American movie fighting stars and stunt choreographers. David Carradine's new television series, "Kung-fu: The New Generation" is sadly guilty of the above choreographic sin.

Another choreographic technique is the RAM method (Rapid Arm Movement). This is well demonstrated in the final knife fight of *Under Siege*. The actors hold their knives and flail their arms about in small figure-eight circles, like a boxer working out on a speed bag. The distinctive "ching-ching" sound effect easily gives one the impression that the knives are touching each other, especially when a clip of some body part getting slashed is edited in. In fact, the knives rarely connect, and if they do, it is by accident and not by design.

The PMT (Perpetual Motion Technique) method was invented by Jackie Chan, and only he can use it to maximum effect. Directors, producers, and artists worldwide consider Chan to be the best fight choreographer in the film industry. The premise of his PMT method is the maintenance of continuous body motion

Craig Reid rehearsing
a technique for
Blood Red Lipstick
(opposite page)

throughout the entire fight sequence to give the impression of nonstop action. Chan's fights already contain continuous action, but his constant body motion enhances the emotional desperation of the conflict. Cynthia Rothrock, an American actress who has appeared in four Hong Kong films, tried unsuccessfully to incorporate Chan's method in her American film, *China O'Brian*. But she never attained the proper emotional content in her body language, so the essential feeling of continuous action is totally missing. Instead, her body motions and hand positions disrupt her timing, producing uncertain fighting technique combinations mixed with flashes of anticlimactic boredom.

A few standard methods have been specifically developed in China for weapon choreography. For sword fights, for example, a choreographer chooses the appropriate time for the actor to do a few fancy sword postures and striking-at-air (twirling) techniques. When used judiciously and at the right time, this can add flair to the weapon sequence. However, when twirling is forced, as often happens in American films, fight continuity gets disrupted. This is evident in the slow-developing, delayed-reaction technique delivery methods used in the action TV show "Raven." Such "nonsense" twirling not only slows down the fight by creating excessive delays between each movement but can amplify already existing skill deficiencies of the actors. This forces the choreographer to rely on the music and on overacted facial expressions to maintain intensity.

Another weapon choreography technique is the YEBET method (YEll Before Each Technique), which requires the actors to yell prior to each individual movement. The yelling acts as a timing cue, based on the—successful—logic that the faster the actors yell, the quicker their movements will be. The Chinese further perfected this method so that the yell and the technique delivery occurred simultaneously.

The importance of sound effects in fight choreography cannot be overemphasized. Jackie Chan once asked me, of American films, "Do the fights look as good as they sound?" The fights from *Batman Returns* were poorly choreographed and the actor's delivery of the techniques was weak, yet the overemphasized sound effects and close-up camera shots cleverly disguised the lack of ability and choreographic originality. Watching American fights without sound effects is an eye-opening experience: one can actually feel the lack of enthusiasm in the actor's movements.

For a country that breeds individuality, American choreography fosters stagnation. Most American stunt coordinators have been raised on the same traditional stunt-schools stock used for many decades. It is rare that they receive enough weapon and fight choreography training to permit them to devise imaginative fighting concepts and techniques. This is why most of the stylized martial-art fight sequences seen in American movies and American television shows all look the same. However, the American audience is gradually being exposed to the Chinese contribution to the international movie scene. So, perhaps, in the not-too-distant future, American audiences will routinely have the pleasure of watching the creativity and originality of the "art of fighting without fighting."

■ Dr. Craig D. Reid is a screenwriter with 13 years of fight-directing experience in the Chinese film industry.

Notes

1. A "fight director" is basically a 2nd unit director, calling all the shots. A "fight choreographer" can make suggestions to the director but has no input on photography.
2. There exists a hierarchy within the ranks of fight choreographers. The head is usually called the "fight director," although he can also be known as the fight choreographer; his assistants are fight choreographers of various kinds. And at the very top are people like Jackie Chan, who is director, fight director, *and* fight choreographer.

Reviews

A Zed & Two Noughts

Writer/Director: Peter Greenaway. Producers: Kees Kasander and Peter Sainsbury. Cinematographer: Sacha Vierny. Music: Michael Nyman. Skouras Pictures.

Oliver and Oswald Deuce, two brothers who work as animal behaviorists in a zoo, are devastated when their wives are killed in a freak accident: their automobile collides with a swan. These grief-stricken men are scientists, and their compulsive reactions take the form of a series of bizarre experiments on the nature of mortality: ingesting shattered glass from the accident scene, entering a tiger's cage, obsessively viewing the entire BBC "Life on Earth" series, freeing zoo animals, and documenting with time-lapse cinematography the decay of corpses (apple, prawns, angelfish, crocodile, dog, and zebra) from progressively higher rungs of the evolutionary ladder.

Both brothers take as sexual partners women who offer them solace. First, each accepts the overtures of the zoo prostitute, Venus de Milo, and then each takes as his lover the convalescing Alba Bewick, a friend of their wives who lost her leg while driving the car in which the two women were killed. Before the film ends, all four of these central characters have joined the wives—and the parade of (time-lapse recorded) animal corpses—in death. Milo dies in the shadow of an animal enclosure fulfilling her fondest wish—copulation with a zebra; Alba takes her own life, "exhausted" after losing her remaining leg to the surgeon Van Meegeren and after bearing Oliver and Oswald's twins; the brothers administer lethal injections to each other under the watchful eye of their time-lapse camera (although this posthumous filming of their own decay fails when a plague of snails short-circuits their equipment).

So scans the plot of *A Zed & Two Noughts* (1985), a film which prototypically demonstrates Peter Greenaway's ingenuity in marshaling a wide and complex range of cinematic weapons to attack all that is complacent and disingenuous in mainstream cinema.

On first viewing, a Greenaway film appears to communicate on three distinct levels. His plots are dark comedies about victimizations, oppressions (usually sexual), and obsessive preoccupations with death. His characters indulge in ritualized game-playing, introducing and parodying rational systems of classification. And his visual style juxtaposes painterly tableaux and sinuous camera movements. These three elements—darkly perverse narratives, intellectually playful characters, and a highly aestheticized visual style—combine to create the particular effect of a Greenaway film. After successive viewings, however, what it striking is the way these elements invade and inform each other, asserting artifice and reflexivity on every level.

In a *Zed & Two Noughts,* Greenaway's narrative deliberately "short-circuits" itself like his protagonists' final, failed experiment; moving inexorably toward its denouement, it nevertheless incorporates strategically placed elements that challenge and subvert its ostensible commitment to representation. Among these elements is the violent shattering of cause and effect that prompts the brothers' quest to piece back together the shreds of evidence concerning their wives' deaths. Early in the film we see the brothers at work at the zoo, hear an offscreen car crash, and witness its aftermath: on a dark, storm-swept street sits a large automobile, its windshield pierced by a huge, bloody swan; three women lie crumpled inside it. An indistinct, fragmented radio broadcast asks: "A swan . . . what sort of swan? Leda? Who's Leda?" Given ample effect yet denied all but the most absurd cause, the audience (like the brothers) is left to speculate about the events that led up to the crash. Some of the film's most playful dialogue traces the fractured logic summoned up to "explain" what happened: Oliver accuses Alba, saying, "You were driving down Swan's Way, you were wearing feathers, and you were driving a Ford Mercury . . . you were asking for trouble!"

Aside from disrupting narrative logic, Greenaway employs various strategies to challenge conventional filmic representation. He transforms the cinematic color image of the crash victims to a black-and-white newspaper photograph on the obituary page (an adjacent article headlined "Architect Dies" concerns Kracklite, the protagonist of an earlier Greenaway film, *The Belly of an Architect*). Later, Milo sifts through individual words and phrases clipped by Oliver from miscellaneous newspaper accounts: " . . . eggbound . . . there were no children." The photograph and the clippings (like the pieces of shattered glass from the accident) constitute parts of a puzzle that the brothers attempt to solve while their dead wives have become abstractions—still, flattened images, broken phrases of a distorted radio voice.

The BBC "Life on Earth" documentary about evolution—screened by one brother in a film theater

and by the other on a video monitor—is believed by Oliver capable of "separating true clues from red herrings." But how can Darwin help explain what has happened? Various characters call into question the veracity of both Darwin's theory and the documentary. Watching the film, Oswald asserts that, instead of becoming extinct, dinosaurs actually grew feathers and became birds. Fallast, the zoo's controller, claims that rather than finding answers to his wife's death, Oliver "will find this film inaccurate." And Van Hoyten, the zoo's "Keeper of Owls," calls Darwin a "great storyteller," while the documentary is a "dreary fiction." Thus, in almost an aside, Greenaway challenges a major film genre: the documentary film cannot claim "objective" representation of reality any more than the theory of evolution can explain the meaning of life.

If the rationalism of cause and effect and of cinematic and "scientific" objectivity are challenged in *A Zed & Two Noughts*, so too is a simple reading of myths. The film abounds with references to classic fairy tales, familiar Bible stories, and Greek and Roman mythology. Like the references to Darwin, these more often than not occasion debate. The film's primary mythmaker is Milo, who as prostitute and pornographer blurs the line between physical sex and erotic narrative. She excites her clients with tales of sex between humans and animals—"the polar bear and the Eskimo wives," "the obscene animal enclosure," "what Venus did to the unicorn"—although other characters accuse her of concocting fairy tales or children's stories.

On one level, Milo the storyteller stands in for Greenaway the film-maker, as do other characters who struggle to construct narratives and films: Van Meegeren, whose surgery is a covert metaphor for the "cutting" and "splicing" that constructs films, the brothers, whose animal-decomposition film lacks a denouement. Clearly, the brothers' efforts to understand the origins of life—the Adam and Eve version, the Darwinian explanation—are linked to their need to tell the story of their wives' deaths and, more darkly, to their obsessive desire to share their wives' experience of death. Thus the time-lapse decomposition studies stand for impossible, unthinkable "home movies" of de-

Frances Barber as Venus de Milo and Brian Deacon as Oswald in *A Zed & Two Noughts*

parted loved ones just as, in their final gesture, the brothers cast themselves as co-stars in a filmed tableau of human decay.

Among the most salient and immediately striking features of a Greenaway film is, of course, the use of taxonomies or lists; here they include the Greek pantheon, Darwin's eight evolutionary stages of natural selection, the seven days of Genesis, and the 26 letters of the alphabet. Alba recounts her dream of bearing 26 children; her one living child is named Beta. That all of these systems of classification seem gratuitous and irrelevant may be precisely Greenaway's point. As he remarks in an interview, "I've never been happy about the sheer obstinacy of narrative, since I can invent anything I please. In my films I've always tried to relate things to universal systems like the alphabet or numerical counts." Among the many forms of oppression dramatized in the film—the oppression of Alba by Van Meegeren, of Milo by Van Hoyten, of animals by zookeepers, scientists, various profiteers and voyeurs—there is the oppression of "reality" by "narrative" and the oppression of "narrative" by what Greenaway calls "taxonomy."

Probably the most important "taxonomy" in *A Zed & Two Noughts* is the list of authenticated paintings by Vermeer. At one point, Oswald remarks that the number of authenticated Vermeers, once 26, is now 23, linking the paintings to another taxonomy, the English and Greek alphabets. Greenaway, however, sabotages not only one of the film's dearest taxonomies but also one of its most dominant visual metaphors, since art historians still disagree about the number of authentic versus "fake" Vermeers, and since *The Lady with a Red Hat,* which is so extensively quoted here, has been one of the disputed paintings. In a sense, Greenaway, like Van Meegeren, is a "faker" of Vermeers.

Yet it is Vermeer's visual sense, not the number of his authenticated works, that most fascinates Greenaway. As he remarks in the preface to his screenplay, "[T]he overall visual master-of-ceremonies of the film was to be Vermeer—adroit and prophetic manipulator of the two essentials of cinema—the split-second of action, and drama revealed by light." Greenaway's homage to Vermeer is manifest not only in his composition of scenes that "quote" from various Vermeers but also in more general strategies employed throughout the film: his use of the frame to establish symmetry and his attempts to replicate Vermeer's lighting, "always from the left of frame, coming from a source four and a half feet off the ground."

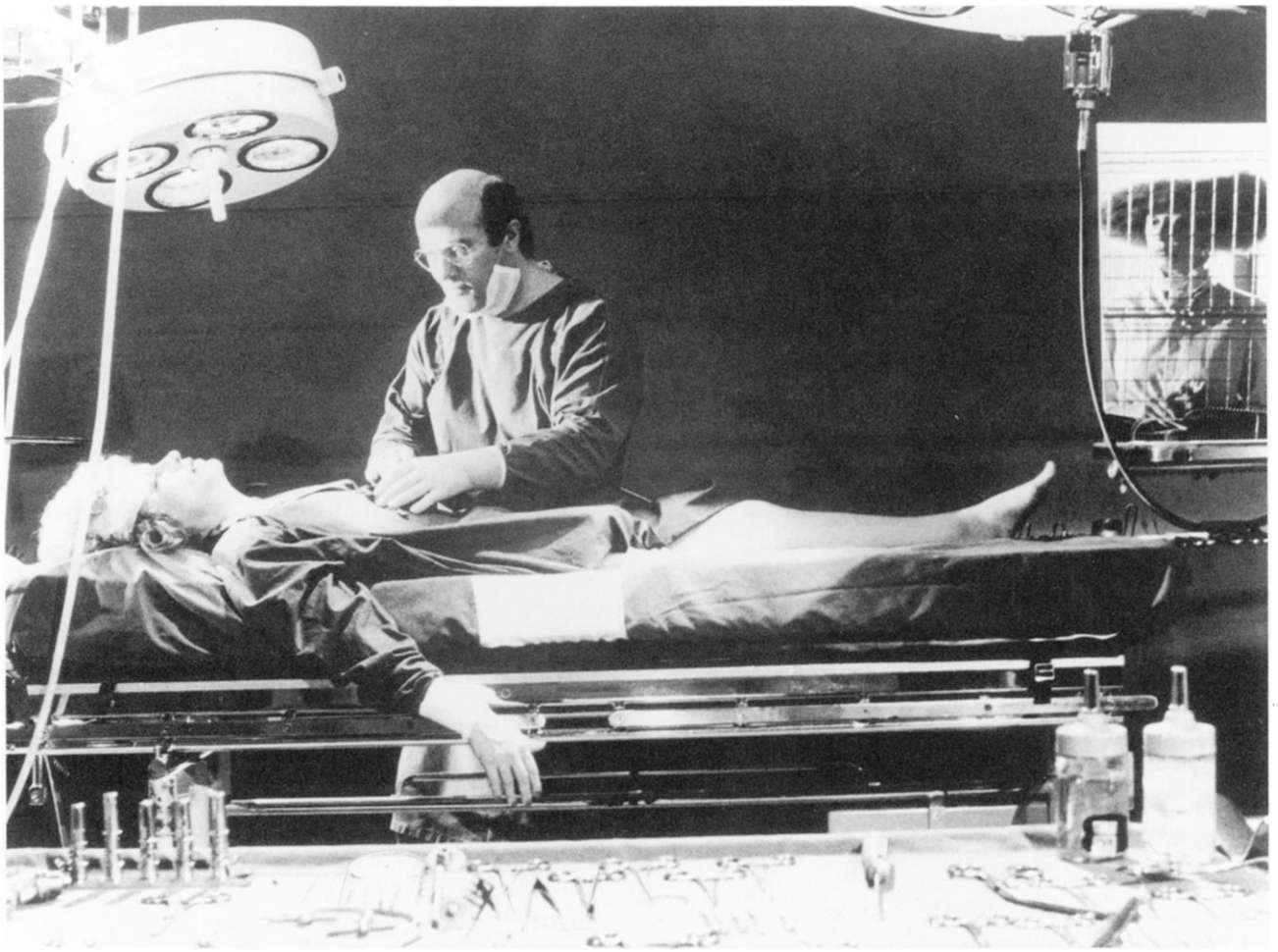
References to Vermeer abound in *A Zed & Two Noughts*. Van Meegeren is identified as the nephew of the accused Nazi collaborator Van Meegeren, who we are told successfully faked Vermeers, fooling the art critics of Europe. Like his uncle, Van Meegeren is obsessed with Vermeer; his surgery is filled with copies of Vermeer paintings, his sitting room replicates a Vermeer interior, and his surgical assistant/mistress wears a wide red hat in the manner of *The Lady with a Red Hat*. Her name, Caterina Bolnes, is that of Vermeer's wife.

Van Meegeren is a sinister and enigmatic figure; after fitting Alba with an artificial leg, he forces her to pose in a posture identical to *The Music Lesson*, pinning her to a piano bench. Vermeer's domestic paintings never show their subjects' legs, so when Van Meegeren presses Alba to undergo a second amputation, we wonder what his motives really are, especially when, as she is being prepared for surgery, Bolnes arranges her hair in the style of a Vermeer model.

Greenaway's homage to Vermeer is nowhere more playful than in his complex parody of *An Artist in His Studio*, in which an artist, standing in the foreground in a zebra-striped jacket with his back to the viewer, contemplates his model, who poses in the studio background. Greenaway precedes his tableau with a sequence in the zoo involving a black-and-white clad couple and a pacing zebra, and begins it by focusing in close-up on the artist's zebra coat, wittily blurring the boundaries of the two sections with a shot change that seems for a moment to unite them. The camera tracks back, revealing the model, Caterina Bolnes, naked except for her red hat, but, as in the original painting, holding a trumpet in one hand and a book against her breast.

As the camera movement continues, Van Meegeren comes into view—the painter confronting his model—but in this version he is a photographer, illuminating the set (as the brothers illuminate their experiments) with his flashbulbs. The contemplative pose of the original painting is broken as "artist" and "model" squabble over the extent of her success in distracting the brothers from Alba, until Bolnes finally throws down her props in anger, revealing, for the split second before the next shot change, her nude torso.

The flashbulbs, the nudity, and the obscenity disturb and undercut what appears to be a meditation on the painting (and by extension on the relationship between painting and cinema); the sequence seems perverse and comic. In the substitution of photography for painting, Greenaway shows an artist poised in the act of capturing a split second in a continuum of



Preparations for surgery: Van Meegeren (Gerard Thoolen) and Alba Bewick (Andrea Ferreol)

activity; clearly, Vermeer's work represents "one twenty-fourth of a second of seventeenth-century time, exposed at f8." Thus, the paintings too occasion his examination of the possibilities and limitations of narrative.

If Vermeer provides one source of visual construction and play, twinship provides another. The film is full of symmetrical compositions constructed so that the left side of the frame mirrors the right—particularly in those scenes in which Oliver and Oswald appear. Undifferentiated psychologically because of their obsessive grief, they become more physically alike as the film progresses. In one shot, Oliver and Oswald sit naked side by side under twin "Vermeer" self-portraits (another joke: Vermeer is thought to have painted no self-portraits), the black-and-white floor beneath them echoing the floor of the paintings; they cross their legs, left over right, right over left, creating mirror images of each other. When we learn that they were once Siamese twins, it doesn't come as a shock, because by then we not only can hardly tell them apart, we also have begun to feel the force of their desire to merge with each other.

Desolated and abandoned after their wives' deaths, the brothers take some comfort in Milo and Alba. When they first visit Alba, the twins sit on either side of the bed as she recounts the story of the legless whore who had "no limbs to hinder entry." Soon, in a tender and perverse ménage à trois, Alba becomes both lover and mother. Their relationship with her is doubly incestuous: they not only recover the mother who in separating them denied their twinship, but through her mediation they also seek to rejoin each other. When Alba dies after bearing them twins, their reunion is complete. As their relationship progresses, there are

many scenes in which Alba serves as central figure with Oliver and Oswald on either side in a symmetrical set. In one, they undress on opposite sides of the bed which is centered in the shot and, joining Alba there, roll away from her in opposite directions to reveal the scars that mark their surgical separation.

In these symmetrical compositions we also understand that for Greenaway, as for Van Meegeren, Alba is the immobile figure around which the film is constructed. Ultimately, Greenaway's overriding principle of symmetry demands the removal of her remaining leg: as Alba says to the twins:

> Alba: What's the point of watching *me*? My body's only half here.
> Oliver: Then you'll fit better into the film frame.
> Alba: (Laughing) . . . . A fine epitaph: here lies a body cut down to fit the picture.

But if Alba is the film's most victimized character, she is also its strongest. Greenaway noted the vital power of women characters when he remarked, "In my films the female is often the major organizer of events, very much against the contemporary use of females as passive objects or at best catalysts of male behavior." While Oliver and Oswald make a spectacle of their grief through obsessive actions, they are also strangely impassive, often nonverbal. Alba, on the other hand, is permitted endless verbal and emotional expression (albeit in a heavy, almost impenetrable accent). She can openly express her desire for the twins, she can grieve passionately for her leg, she can scream in fear of Van Meegeren's machinations, and she can fantasize elaborately about her "deliverer," a legless man named Felipe Arc-en-Ciel. When Felipe actually appears late in the film to claim her, he is both the incarnation of Alba's fantasy and a representation of the power of fantasy to disrupt and transform narrative.

Sex with animals, a monstrous coupling, is one of the film's most subversive juxtapositions and most transgressive sources of fantasy. The allusions to Leda and the swan, like Milo's erotic animal stories and Felipe's attempts to "mount" a mare, underscore the film's fascination with the forbidden. In one of the film's most disturbing and beautiful scenes, Milo is

Alba and the twins

invited by Van Hoyten to enter an animal compound and copulate with a zebra; she walks into the enclosure and disappears into the shadows. Greenaway leads the viewer on a path like her own: an elegant and melancholy camera movement propels us across the threshold to witness her disappearance. "Cut down to fit the picture," or perversely joined, both animals and humans alike are trapped and oppressed by their mortality and by the narratives in which they are inscribed.

The theme of mortality is developed most obviously, of course, in Oliver's experiments in time-lapse cinematography, in which weeks of decay are compressed into a matter of seconds, creating a peculiar travesty of life after death. The bodies twitch grotesquely as bacteria, swarming pools of maggots, crustaceans, and snails act as agents of decomposition. These sequences, accompanied by irreverently upbeat music, parody the hierarchy of evolution by progressing from apple to zebra. Portraying actual decay, the time-lapse segments sabotage the viewer's sense of cinematic fantasy; they are not faked. Decaying bodies appear "animated" as they bloat and rot in triple-time; against the background of symmetrical grids, they attack Greenaway's own principle of formal symmetry. We are reminded not only of the director's chicanery but also that all narratives are construction and that evasions of mortality are inherent in their structures.

It is in the latter regard that the two Noughts, Oliver and Oswald, can be ultimately understood. By portraying them as Siamese twins who were separated at birth and whose greatest longing is to be reunited in death, Greenaway places them in the context of that part of "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" in which Freud, attempting to establish the principle of the death instinct as "an urge to return to an earlier state of things," cites the Platonic myth of the double man, cut into two by Zeus, whose greatest desire was to rejoin the sundered halves of himself. The experiments in decomposition are thus manifestations of a repetition compulsion in which Oswald and Oliver reexperience their wives' death and dissolution; they are also rehearsals for their own death. As integral elements and, simultaneously, disruptions of Greenaway's narrative (structured as it is in various taxonomies) they are, in Freud's words, "circuitous paths to death."

In his essay "Freud's Masterplot," Peter Brooks argues that this desire for closure (death) and the concurrent wish to delay and anticipate its fulfillment are intrinsic to the nature of narratives. If narrative systems, as Brooks believes, are inevitably figurations of mortality, then Greenaway's quarrel with narrative can be understood as an attempt to check or defer the necessity of closure, while at the same time acknowledging its inevitability. Plot, after all, is merely another taxonomy, and Greenaway's taxonomies are always structured within a finite series of numbers. For all of Greenaway's efforts to defer or, in Freud's words, "detour," mortality ultimately fills the frame.

However, if there is one resource available to Greenaway that "survives" both his characters and the narrative that confines them, it is the camera itself. Greenaway's camera flagrantly transgresses all thresholds, including that of death; it invades all enclosed spaces; it enlivens the dead. Throughout the film, Greenaway continually plays off the parameters of stasis and movement. If stop-motion cinematography is Greenaway's primary means for activating inanimate objects, film technique can elide time and create the illusion of continuous action, thereby presenting the brothers and the viewer with "aestheticized" documents of the decomposing apple, prawns, and crocodile. Photography can, conversely, reduce the movements of animals to a still image: according to the screenplay, Oswald's photographs of the one-legged gorilla "record the animal's movement in a set of Muybridge-like stills seen later in the film''—just as the still photographs of Alba's country estate, L'Escargot, "come to life" and the "live" images of the car crash become "freeze frames" as they are transformed to newspaper images.

The reference to Muybridge is telling, since his sequential still photographs of human and animal locomotion, thrown sequentially onto screens for paying customers, contributed to the development of the illusion of motion that informs the cinema. Film embodies Muybridge's paradox of stasis and movement and provides yet another kind of narrative construction for Greenaway, who throughout the film juxtaposes still and moving images. For Greenaway, cinema is a sort of "zoo"—an enclosure for spectacle, a public space enlivened by framed movement.

Like the zoo animals and the characters shown pacing, running, and gliding through space, Greenaway's camera is constantly "on the prowl," tracking toward, around, or away from characters and tableaux. Most memorable is the camera movement that retreats from a decomposing dog in a vitrine, traversing the entire length of a dark laboratory filled with decomposing creatures, all of whom are rhythmically illuminated by flashbulbs: the space is shown to be surprisingly dense and complex. The extended tracking shot provides an exhilarating experience that

competes with narrative by energetically enlivening otherwise inanimate objects.

Characteristically, the visual style of the film detaches itself from the narrative by repeating vivid images in varied contexts. The red-and-white striped streamers that blow laterally across the frame as Oliver gathers broken glass from the site of his wife's death are echoed by the thin, billowing curtains that form a lateral arc behind Alba's deathbed. Circular shapes often dominate the frame: the "O"s of the huge neon-lit ZOO sign that hovers in the background of many shots; the spinning film reels that hold the BBC documentary; the white circle bite in the decomposing apple. Light too creates circles: in the gorilla house, the brothers' flashlights cast twin circles of light reminiscent of the car headlights at the crash site much earlier in the film.

The interplay between light and darkness, like the juxtaposition of black and white and the dialectic of stasis and motion, activates the film's images in ways that assert aesthetic over narrative values. Dappled light bouncing off the reflective surface of the reptile pool transforms the brothers' faces, upstaging their conversation about being eaten by a crocodile; flickering lights from film projectors and television monitors articulate parts of otherwise darkened spaces in which our view of characters is obliterated while our appreciation of light's jagged power is heightened. The film's ending reverses this process of valuing the absolute power of aestheticized, artificial light—the inexorable snails short out one strobe after another, returning us in the final shot to the natural light of dawn—while at the same time reminding us that over the course of the film, we've been enveloped in a world marked by the dominance of style.

Greenaway reserves his most stunning and provocative effects for his denouement: the death of his protagonists and the failure of their experiment. A languorous anticipatory tracking shot follows the brothers as they move toward the "stage" in the meadow where they commit suicide; an elegant camera movement circles the two as they position themselves on a static grid (to reinforce the symmetry of their identical bodies, haircuts, and poses, the twins lie together as if joined at their shoulders and hips); a montage sequence depicts the snails as they destroy the filming mechanism. The power of the visual and aural transcends the narrative, supplanting any emotional response one might have to the deaths of the twins, whose search for meaning has come to seem naïve at best. At the same time, Greenaway makes a final link between himself and his protagonists; for both, closure is as inevitable as it is ultimately meaningless. There may be something painful about the failure of systems to explain anything, but for Greenaway, there are compensations: intellectual gamesmanship and style. It is not surprising, then, that he insists, "Cinema is far too rich and capable a medium to be merely left to the storytellers."

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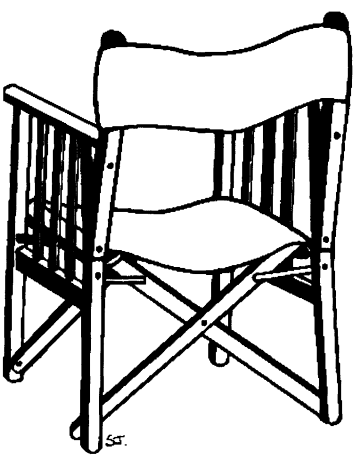

Chaplin

Director: Richard Attenborough. Producers: Attenborough and Mario Kasser. Screenplay: William Boyd, Bryan Forbes, and William Goldman. Cinematographer: Sven Nykvist. Music: John Barry. Carolco/Le Studio Canal+/RCS Video.

If the prevalence and persistence of film biography is any indication of its appeal to filmmakers, the temptation to condense a significant life into a few hours of film must be hard to resist. Yet films of this type so rarely rise above functional mediocrity that we might wonder why such an alluring genre

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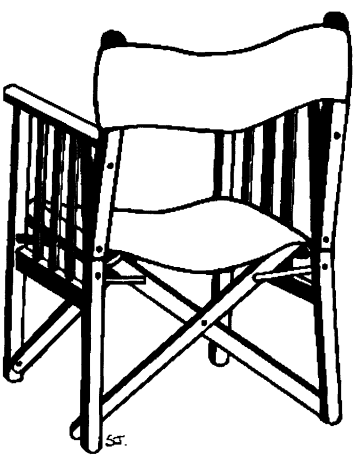

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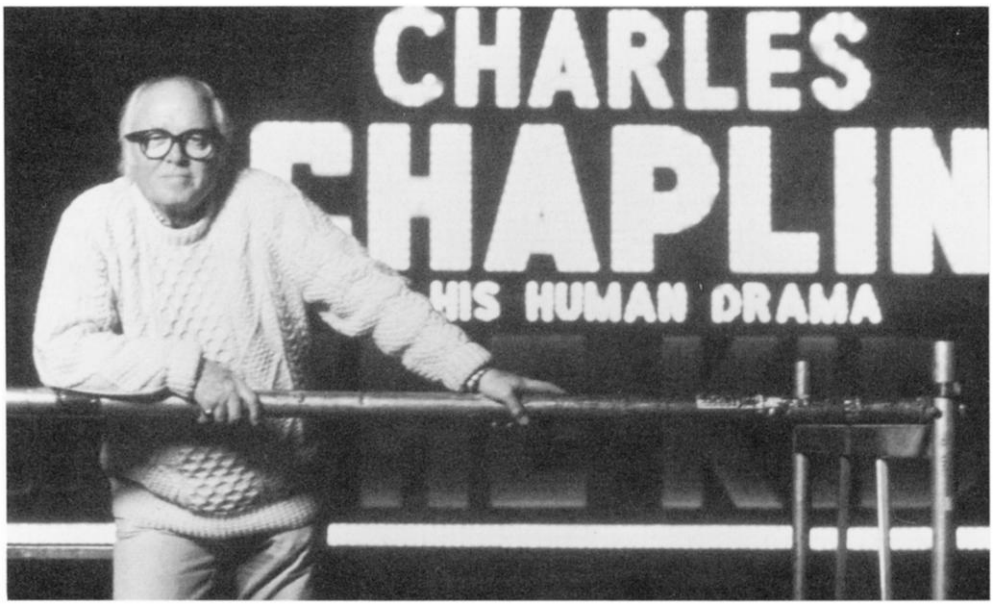


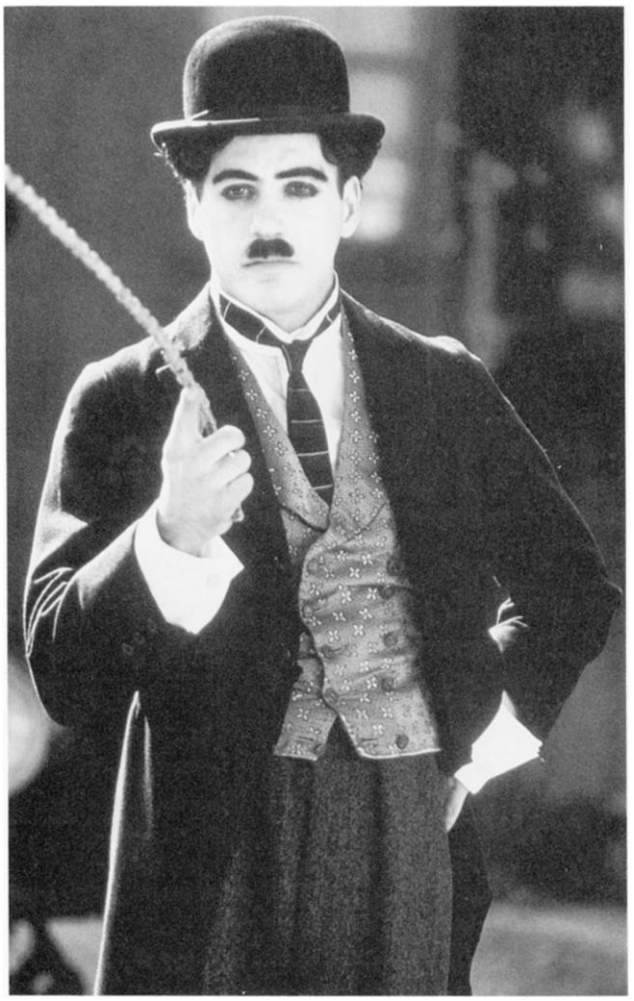
Chaplin's director/ producer, Richard Attenborough

regularly yields such disappointing results. Part of the problem is undoubtedly inherent in biography itself. Reconstructing a life poses endless problems of interpretation, selection, and presentation, and the limitations of a 2-to-4-hour format—even in a medium which thrives on ellipsis and radical compression—compound the difficulty. To succeed, a film biographer must do more than select a worthwhile and appealing subject: he must define his subject—reduce it to some workable essence—before he can begin to shape his raw material effectively.

In *Chaplin,* Richard Attenborough, like most film biographers, is left straddling the first hurdle, partly because his latest subject is notoriously difficult to define. Whereas Gandhi's studied outward simplicity and highly visible political strategy lent themselves readily to conventional film treatment, Chaplin was mercurial and elusive. His charm, humanity, and acute sensibility were completely genuine, yet no artist, as he candidly admitted, could be more completely devoted to himself. Simultaneously or alternately, he was a visual poet, a balletic dancer, a consummate pantomimist, a robust buffoon, a sardonic ironist, and a morose, perfectionistic self-tormentor. During a career which spanned more than seven decades, he insistently tested the limits of artistic expression and personal freedom and increasingly antagonized ultraconservatives, gradually evolving into a mythical being who was both exalted and demonized. The more famous (or infamous) he became, the more difficult it was for everyone, including Chaplin, to define Chaplin.

Although no film biographer could hope to say everything about such a person, Attenborough comes perilously close to trying. His problems begin with a script which, in spite of conspicuous overworking by three authors, remains unfocused and subliterate. The film's cluttered agenda precludes effective development of secondary characters, most of whom—especially the women—are little more than vaguely repellent mannequins. The fictitious editor of Chaplin's autobiography (Anthony Hopkins) becomes a ghostly doppelgänger for the director, wantonly posing inane questions as the film slogs relentlessly through more than 70 years of Chaplin's life. Only the ending pulls together a few major narrative threads to produce a belated, but strangely effective, flash of comprehension.

Perhaps the most annoying symptom of the film's misdirected energies is its pop-Freudian trifling with Chaplin's libido. A prevalent misconception about Chaplin, perpetuated by Kenneth Anger's ubiquitous *Hollywood Babylon,* is that he was primarily attracted to teenaged girls. Like most myths, this hoary gossip has some basis in fact, originating in Chaplin's first two marriages to girls in their mid-teens. However, the yellow-journalistic furor that the resulting divorces provoked was essentially hypocritical, since it was hardly unusual at the time for girls to marry at that age. Apparently such marriages became profitably scandalous only when they involved a famous person. In fact, most of the women who attracted Chaplin, both before and after these marriages, were fully adult. One of Attenborough's principal sources, David Robinson's



Robert Downey, Jr., as Chaplin

Chaplin: His Life and Art, devotes considerable space to Chaplin's relationships with Edna Purviance, Peggy Hopkins Joyce, Pola Negri, Marian Davies, Georgia Hale, and other mature women. However, Attenborough seizes instead on Robinson's casual suggestion that the teenaged Chaplin's frustrated passion for teenaged Hetty Kelly might have resulted in fixation. This "Lolita hypothesis," contrived enough in Nabokov's novel, seems even less credible in Attenborough's film, in spite of his injection of some fictitious bare breasts and rouged lips to give it fetishistic immediacy. The interpretation reveals far more about pop culture's current mystification of sex than it reveals about Chaplin.

Perhaps the most unfortunate consequence of this dallying with sexual tangents is that it deflects attention from a point Attenborough must have considered far more important, given his past interest in social and political nonconformity. Like Attenborough's protagonists in *Gandhi* and *Cry Freedom,* Chaplin challenged a repressive social order and was consequently subjected to obscene harassment by public officials who should have been better occupied. The issue has not lost its currency. The use of government power to suppress dissent or intimidate and discredit political opponents is still widely tolerated in self-styled free societies, and a film biographer might well make this cynical practice the core of a daring and provocative film. Chaplin's experience also raises the persistent question of whether the private lives and beliefs of individuals are a legitimate concern of government, press, and public. Chaplin was deeply implicated in some of twentieth-century America's most fundamental social and political tensions, but Attenborough fails to dramatize these issues effectively. As a result, most American reviews of the film stressed Chaplin's supposed "fondness for underage cuties,"[1] while the ugly spectacle of bigotry, sanctimoniousness, and cold-war hysteria which Chaplin's history inevitably exposes conveniently escapes notice.

Chaplin has its compensations. Attenborough's considerable talent as an actor makes him a sensitive actor's director, and his work with Robert Downey, Jr., as Chaplin often yields gratifying results. Downey replicates Chaplin's accent and gesture with surprising precision; his efforts in the lost art of acrobatic slapstick are somewhat less convincing, but this superficial mimicry is not what makes his performance remarkable. Somehow—perhaps by studying Chaplin's films—Downey has burrowed deep into a forbiddingly difficult character, and at times actually seems to merge with him. He is surprisingly adept at recreating Chaplin's private moods—brooding self-absorption, physical and emotional exhaustion, irritability, icy anger, gritty determination shading into obsession. At one point, as he glumly watches his mad mother (Geraldine Chaplin) rub crumbled crackers on her forehead, he squirms and fidgets, perfectly evoking the pained frustration Chaplin often felt in her presence. Good actors can sometimes compensate for a weak script, but Downey humanizes and sublimates Chaplin in spite of a sleazy tabloid script—a far more impressive achievement.

Apart from Downey's striking performance, *Chaplin* is handsomely photographed and often painstakingly authentic in its recreation of physical detail. Viewers well versed in the subject, however, will be irritated by the film's sometimes capricious distortions of fact, especially when the truth is more compelling. Audiences who simply want to be entertained and

instructed may find the film more satisfying, since it does convey a rough idea of who Chaplin was and why he was important.

Perhaps this is the most valuable service Attenborough's film can perform. While the sum of its parts is greater than the whole, it is good enough to remind us, at an opportune moment, that Chaplin was one of the most substantial and durable artists of the twentieth century. The tribute is well deserved and well intentioned, and a director willing to risk the inevitable invidious comparisons which such a film invites deserves at least some credit for reckless audacity.

CONSTANCE B. KURIYAMA

■ Constance B. Kuriyama teaches at Texas Tech University.

Notes

1. Michael Sragow, "King James and Prince Charlie," *The New Yorker,* December 28, 1992/January 4, 1993, p. 202. Sragow is one of the few reviewers to comment on the film's political content, however.

Fallen Champ
The Untold Story of Mike Tyson

Producer and director: Barbara Kopple. Director of photography: Kevin Keating. Music: Michael Bacon. Tri-Star TV.

Compressing the 1992 Mike Tyson rape case, in all its murky complexity, into a 93-minute documentary was a difficult challenge for Academy Award-winning director Barbara Kopple (*Harlan County, U.S.A.*; *American Dream*), who was commissioned by Tri-Star TV executive producer Diane Sokolow to make a television feature about the boxer for NBC. (*Fallen Champ: The Untold Story of Mike Tyson* was later shown on the USA cable network and is currently available on Columbia Home Video.) Limited by a tight deadline and the unavailability of her subject, Kopple relied on post-conviction interviews with sportswriters, feminists, Tyson's ex-girlfriends, childhood friends, business associates, and trainers as well as footage shot by Michael Marton for a German documentary, *Watch Me Now*, about a young boxer residing at Gus D'Amato's training camp for troubled youths. Marton's footage, which includes incidental glimpses of an adolescent Tyson, gives Kopple's subject some of the candid depth she's coaxed from the laborers of *Harlan County* and *American Dream*. What Kopple has created in *Fallen Champ*, as far as this is possible, is a sort of consciousness of Michael Tyson, a range of opinions that reconstructs his past and illuminates his present in an Indiana penitentiary.

The conviction of boxing's brightest star to a six-year prison sentence for the rape of 18-year-old beauty contestant Desiree Washington has been one of the more resonant celebrity scandals of late. A tragic portrait of this former icon of black power and success emerges here, one that, like all Kopple's work, transcends the individual.

Visually, *Fallen Champ* conveys beautifully the narcotic thrill of Tyson's power, the frenzied ascent of the boxer. The look of *Fallen Champ* is much like the director's *American Dream,* with its assemblage of television broadcasts, rapid forward momentum, and the prominence of an emotional sound track: a soulful female voice and somber woodwinds bring the mood down, as drumbeats carry it back up, enunciating Tyson's punches. Music provides a powerful additional voice in the drama, underscoring the visual. Kopple captures the garish, carnivalesque heat of the boxing ring, and of Tyson's body, frozen in an incandescent strobe moment. Kopple has made a *Raging Bull* closer to the bone, with the same visceral jabs and punches, but speeded up, enlivened by kinetic editing and fragmented sound bites which evoke the stitched-together, frantic feel of newscast. Scorsese's Weegee-style flash photo becomes, here, the unflinching, color-soaked gaze of the news camera, a compilation of truth and speculation that resonates with raw passion. While *Raging Bull* makes the hellbent fury of Jake La Motta a personal demon, in *Fallen Champ* the rage of Mike Tyson is a glorious exorcism of his past and of his escape from a base and less heroic fury.

Boxing literalizes a physical, Horatio Alger struggle to achieve which for Tyson defined the rules of a game but never explained the labyrinth of real life. *Fallen*

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Perhaps this is the most valuable service Attenborough's film can perform. While the sum of its parts is greater than the whole, it is good enough to remind us, at an opportune moment, that Chaplin was one of the most substantial and durable artists of the twentieth century. The tribute is well deserved and well intentioned, and a director willing to risk the inevitable invidious comparisons which such a film invites deserves at least some credit for reckless audacity.

CONSTANCE B. KURIYAMA

■ Constance B. Kuriyama teaches at Texas Tech University.

Notes

1. Michael Sragow, "King James and Prince Charlie," *The New Yorker,* December 28, 1992/January 4, 1993, p. 202. Sragow is one of the few reviewers to comment on the film's political content, however.

Fallen Champ
The Untold Story of Mike Tyson

Producer and director: Barbara Kopple. Director of photography: Kevin Keating. Music: Michael Bacon. Tri-Star TV.

Compressing the 1992 Mike Tyson rape case, in all its murky complexity, into a 93-minute documentary was a difficult challenge for Academy Award-winning director Barbara Kopple (*Harlan County, U.S.A.*; *American Dream*), who was commissioned by Tri-Star TV executive producer Diane Sokolow to make a television feature about the boxer for NBC. (*Fallen Champ: The Untold Story of Mike Tyson* was later shown on the USA cable network and is currently available on Columbia Home Video.) Limited by a tight deadline and the unavailability of her subject, Kopple relied on post-conviction interviews with sportswriters, feminists, Tyson's ex-girlfriends, childhood friends, business associates, and trainers as well as footage shot by Michael Marton for a German documentary, *Watch Me Now*, about a young boxer residing at Gus D'Amato's training camp for troubled youths. Marton's footage, which includes incidental glimpses of an adolescent Tyson, gives Kopple's subject some of the candid depth she's coaxed from the laborers of *Harlan County* and *American Dream*. What Kopple has created in *Fallen Champ*, as far as this is possible, is a sort of consciousness of Michael Tyson, a range of opinions that reconstructs his past and illuminates his present in an Indiana penitentiary.

The conviction of boxing's brightest star to a six-year prison sentence for the rape of 18-year-old beauty contestant Desiree Washington has been one of the more resonant celebrity scandals of late. A tragic portrait of this former icon of black power and success emerges here, one that, like all Kopple's work, transcends the individual.

Visually, *Fallen Champ* conveys beautifully the narcotic thrill of Tyson's power, the frenzied ascent of the boxer. The look of *Fallen Champ* is much like the director's *American Dream,* with its assemblage of television broadcasts, rapid forward momentum, and the prominence of an emotional sound track: a soulful female voice and somber woodwinds bring the mood down, as drumbeats carry it back up, enunciating Tyson's punches. Music provides a powerful additional voice in the drama, underscoring the visual. Kopple captures the garish, carnivalesque heat of the boxing ring, and of Tyson's body, frozen in an incandescent strobe moment. Kopple has made a *Raging Bull* closer to the bone, with the same visceral jabs and punches, but speeded up, enlivened by kinetic editing and fragmented sound bites which evoke the stitched-together, frantic feel of newscast. Scorsese's Weegee-style flash photo becomes, here, the unflinching, color-soaked gaze of the news camera, a compilation of truth and speculation that resonates with raw passion. While *Raging Bull* makes the hellbent fury of Jake La Motta a personal demon, in *Fallen Champ* the rage of Mike Tyson is a glorious exorcism of his past and of his escape from a base and less heroic fury.

Boxing literalizes a physical, Horatio Alger struggle to achieve which for Tyson defined the rules of a game but never explained the labyrinth of real life. *Fallen*

Champ follows the mythic ascent and resounding fall of an African-American superhero, a violent, angry, brilliant youth who channeled his energies into positive directions and became as celebrated by white America as by black. What white American ordinarily feared in black men became awesome in Tyson, whose fetishized masculine body was tamed to the definition of sport.

Kopple uses interviews with Tyson's peers from his old neighborhood of Brownsville, N.Y., to suggest the miracle of his escape from the everyday violences of the poor urban black male. Tyson was a bubbling-up of these forces, of street crime and dangerous bravado, tamed into profit and an athletic perfection shaped by men and money. But was Tyson's flight from the streets his salvation, or was the world of boxing just a higher stakes version of the same economic slavery and den of thieves? It's a question the documentary never touches on, perhaps because in some ways, it would deflate the one hope many of the Brownsville children and men express—of some miraculous escape from the streets.

But while America was rallying around Tyson as a man rising above the corruption of the streets against all odds, he was sinking beneath the pressures of suffocating, institutionalized corruption . . . that of the American sports and entertainment industry. He fell prey to the likes of Don King and Donald Trump, icons of the perception-altering world of big, fast money where the mere making of it becomes valiant. But even individual influence is minimized by a network greater than these men and women. America got what America demanded. Kopple attested that she was "trying to see what we do as Americans, as people, to other human beings, and how they become meal tickets."

Novelist Joyce Carol Oates, succinctly cutting to the heart of boxing's gory center, calls the sport a "strange exercise in complicity." To unburden their own souls, the fans outside the ring urge the fighters on, toward physical expression of the energies society denies and represses. The same sense of mythic lines-in-the-sand and decisive battles appears in Kopple's other work: in, for instance, the conquering id of *Harlan County*'s gun thugs.

With *Fallen Champ,* Kopple steps across that line in the Kentucky asphalt that divides *Harlan County*'s coal miners from the thugs, and talks face to face with these men driven by pathetic notions of power—the chance to finger a gun tucked in chino waistbands and stand on the side of might (and therefore, right). Every spectator outside of the ring who sides with Tyson is able to be, for a moment, in on the action. Perhaps the most frightening sights Kopple's camera reveals are the faces of those who blindly and vehemently stand up for their fallen hero, those who desperately claw at his fame, hoping that some of it might chip off in their hands.

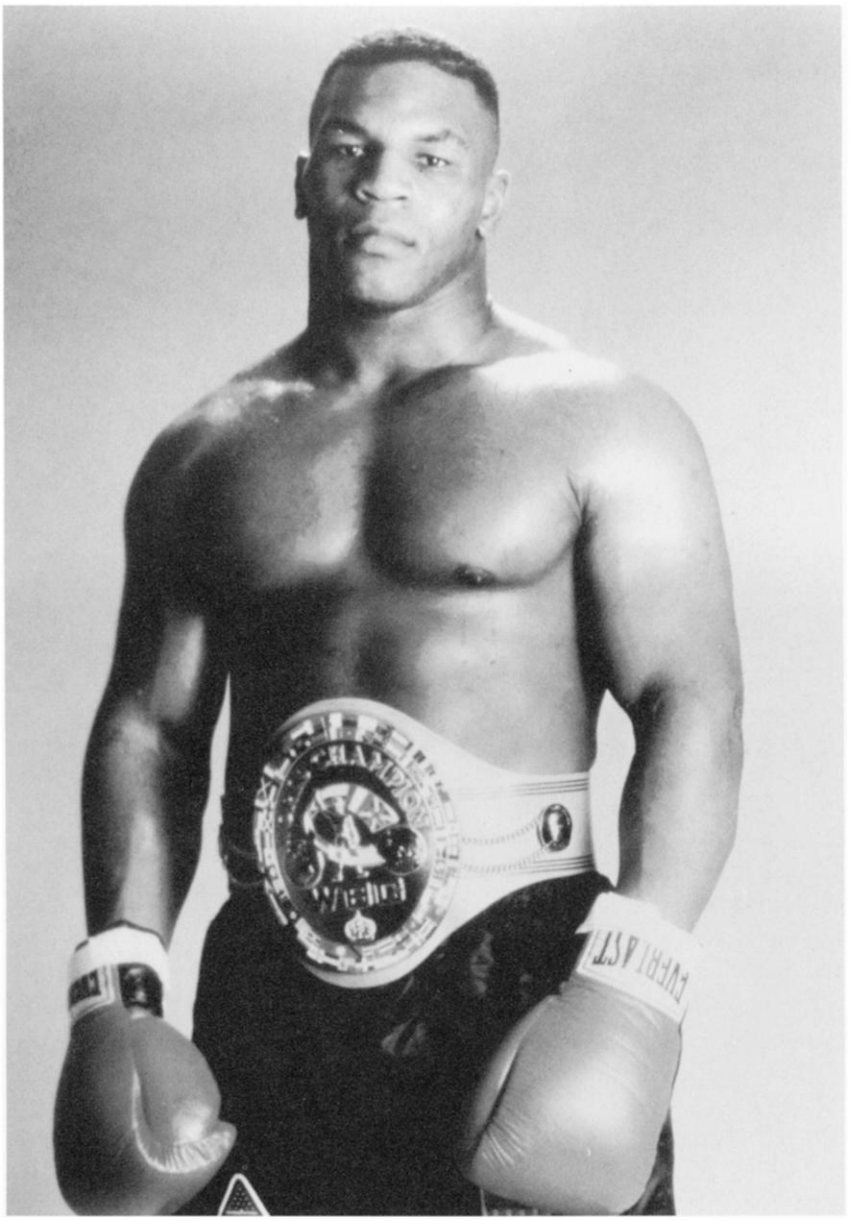
Tyson's chauffeur, Rudy Gonzalez, apparently also a kind of unofficial pimp to the star, talks about masculine complicity inside the ring and out, about machismo: "The world has this impression of us as 'Here's a guy who goes around grabbing people' and stuff like that, and that's not true. First of all, for me to grab you, you have to be within my reach." Or as Tyson's bodyguard Ken Simmons remarks, "Girls want their butts grabbed, *alright*?" Masculinity speaks through the law of the streets so that even the chauffeur and the bodyguard appropriate the privileged arrogance of the fighter.

Kopple uses statements like these to suggest how Washington's rape came about, to evoke the atmosphere of a male sports club that bred the notion of women as one more round. Unfortunately, some of the subtleties of gender are overlooked in a film that ultimately sees Tyson as victim. *Fallen Champ*'s closing imagery—black-and-white still photos of Tyson's glory in the ring—ends with a snapshot from his youth that poignantly suggests the promise in every child.

The director makes an interesting case for how a gentle, awkward boy was shaped by a variety of forces into a man who epitomized male privilege. Kopple suggests that power and money, and their corruptive influence, are at the core of the Tyson story. But in presenting the boxer as a man unable to control his own destiny in the face of these forces (much as the laborers of her other documentaries succumb to the might of American capitalism), Kopple ends up privileging the rapist over his victim. By making Tyson's bitter fall the crux of her film, she suggests that because his rise was greater than the rape victim's, his fall was therefore more profound.

Kopple can't be faulted for sticking to her subject, and the partial subjectivity that it requires. But when, more than halfway through the film, she introduces Desiree Washington's voice, it is merely the last in a series of foils that marred Tyson's climb to fame (after the death of Gus D'Amato and the tumultuous marriage to Robin Givens). The appropriation of victimhood for the black man is again subtly bolstered—but at the expense of a black woman. From Louis Farrakhan at a Mike Tyson defense fundraiser to black ministers lamenting the fall of one of their own, Kopple reveals the failure of the black community to publicly embrace Washington as victim. The "Free Mike Tyson" T-shirts still for sale on the streets of Washington, D.C.,

Mike Tyson



and New York City and the use of Tyson as racism's political poster child means the flesh of the black woman continues to be incapable of sustaining political weight or meaning. For a nation slowly coming to grasp endemic racism but still reluctant to acknowledge colorblind misogyny, a "high-tech lynching" beats a cry of rape on the media chessboard. As Eldridge Cleaver asserted in *Soul on Ice*, rape was something he "practiced" on black women before he carried out his political insurrection on the white man's chattel, where it actually *meant something*. While the rape of white women, as Cleaver was well aware, was a powerful metaphor in racism's folklore, attacking the black woman's body lacks political significance.

Kopple's film is an attempt to make meaning, through a kind of collective storytelling which recounts a folk hero's fall, But with all the hypothesizing, moralizing, and opining of her subjects, Kopple is reluctant to throw her own pronouncement of Tyson's guilt or innocence into the mix. By observing the documentary-maker's prerogative—to illuminate, but not judge—Kopple ultimately just contributes to this myth-making without truly questioning it.

FELICIA FEASTER

■ Felicia Feaster is a graduate student in the Film Studies Department at Emory University.

Book Reviews

The Body in the Mirror

Shapes of History in Italian Cinema

By Angela Dalle Vacche. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992. $55.00 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Taking as her starting point a set of oppositions and the movement implicit in their bipolarity, Dalle Vacche offers an intriguing model for reading Italian cinema as it relates to national (film) history. The oppositions can be summarized as follows:

opera	commedia dell'arte
statuesque body	dancing body
macrohistory	microhistory
monument	document

The style of much silent and fascist cinematography was operatic. It strove to turn the body of actors as well as the body politic into statues, neoclassical figures moving on a macrohistorical stage, with the grandiose tempo of opera. Neorealism, instead, "relies on the tradition of commedia dell'arte." (5) Developing "a new acting style and casting criteria where the corporality of the actor had priority over the words of the script," (272) neorealism was a shift of gears, capturing the body of actors and the body politic in their daily rhythms with a documentary improvisation. Recent Italian cinema—by which Dalle Vacche means the work of directors such as Scola, Bertolucci, Taviani—has managed "to tap and weave together the two competing strains in the history of Italian cinema," (280) overcoming, in a sense, their opposition and giving rise to a third way of making cinema. "Operatic macrohistory and comedic microhistory meet in recent Italian cinema, because its project is to combine the legacies of fascism and neorealism." (6) Or, better yet: because recent historical and critical thought has unearthed the similarities behind the differences between fascism and antifascism.

Opposed though fascist and neorealist cinemas were, they both relied on a historiography of identity: just as the philosophies of the fascist Giovanni Gentile, the liberal Croce, and the communist Gramsci all upheld notions of unity and continuity, so did fascism and antifascism share several metaphysical underpinnings. After 1968—conveniently, if stereotypically, taken by Dalle Vacche as the year of an epistemological break—Italian film-makers sought to circumvent the opposites, by driving the wedge of disunity and contradiction in their narration of the Italian nation.

Dalle Vacche's book is at once a test for and an explanation of the above tripartite generative model. If nothing else, *The Body in the Mirror* has the merit of investigating the cinematic representation of the historical events which are the object of constant (re)negotiation and have become metaphors in the discursive formations presiding over national identity: the Risorgimento (the four wars which led to the geo-political constitution of Italy as we know it today), Fascism, and the Resistance movement. The first, although much less represented than the other two, is arguably the moment when it all began: national identity and pride, indeed the very idea that Sicilians and Piedmontese belong to the same country, is basically a product of (the retrospective reading of) this historical period. The interpretation and representation of the Risorgimento is still at the core of the history programs in schools. In regard to Fascism and the Resistance, just as postwar Italian cinema has been over determined by them, present-day events are often read and explained by a recourse to those years. Fascism and Resistance are like a primal scene to which Italian film-makers keep returning.

Nine films are analyzed in depth to support the book's main thesis. In the first chapter, Pastrone's *Cabiria* (1914) and Gallone's *Scipio Africanus* (1937) provide the material for Dalle Vacche's foray into nationalist, silent, and fascist cinemas, their use of athletic, statuesque bodies and their allegories of the present via the spectacular representation of the past. In the second chapter, Bertolucci's *The Conformist* (1970) is used as an example of how Italian cinema looked at Fascism after 1968. A film that "can be better understood in the light of poststructuralist and neomarxist categories," (63) *The Conformist* "depicts the constitution of subjectivity in fascist ideology" (78) and indirectly makes us understand, through the protagonist's political shift at the end, the extent to which "the two roles, fascism and antifascism, are isomorphic." (78) By now a widely accepted idea, the essential continuity between fascism and antifascism—and, similarly, between pre-fascist liberalism and fascism—will also be suggested later in the book. Still, I could not help wishing that Dalle Vacche had analyzed a postwar film on Fascism made before 1968, in order to better gauge the validity of her argument.

Chapters 3 through 5 are dedicated to the analysis of three films on the Risorgimento made, respectively, before and after WWII and after 1968: Blasetti's *1860* (1933), Visconti's *Senso* (1954), and the Taviani brothers' *Allonsanfan* (1973). Surprisingly, Visconti's film,

although made at a time when the left was still relying on the idea of class unity and identity, displays an irony which hijacks the operatic spectacle. This is because "Visconti's relation to Italian history and melodrama is ambivalent." (141) Using *Senso* as a term of reference, the Tavianis theorize history as a discontinuous process and thus take a stand against Marxist historicism.

The reading of Rossellini's *Paisan* (1946) and the Taviani brothers' *Night of the Shooting Stars* (1982) forms the bulk of chapter 6, in which the author discusses "the Resistance after WWII and after May 1968." Whereas for Rossellini there was a unified national self fighting against a foreign invader which, like a virus, had corrupted some of the healthy cells of the Italian body politic, the Tuscan film-makers challenged the theme of national and class unity and portrayed the resistance as an internal war as well. The Tavianis blend an operatic telling of history with a neorealist observation of behavior, exemplifying the style of recent Italian cinema. Bertolucci's *The Spider's Stratagem* (1970), discussed in chapter 7, represents the way antifascism was regarded after 1968. Just as happened with the Taviani's rewriting of the Resistance, contradiction and disunity weave their way into Bertolucci's depiction of the antifascist Athos Magnani, who, as his son discovers, was in fact collaborating with the fascists.

In a thought-provoking conclusion, Dalle Vacche traces the relationship between French and Italian film cultures. Arguing that the nouvelle vague borrowed its antiliterary slant from neorealism and that French filmmakers and critics understood the importance of directors such as Rossellini better than their Italian counterparts, she shows the extent to which the French films of Ettore Scola (*La Nuit de Varennes* [1982], *Le Bal* [1983]) broach a kind of historical cinema that is in keeping with the "new" history developed by Febrve, Braudel, and Foucault.

Next to the main line of argument, *The Body in the Mirror* is rich in subtextual tangents, such as the relationship between film and painting, sexual difference, and the homosociality of Italian cinema. Inevitably, given the scope of her analysis, Dalle Vacche occasionally gives the impression of generalizing too much (as in her broad assumptions about sculpture and dance, the battle of the sexes, and the Oedipal plot) and of overlooking examples which would contradict her thesis (not all silent cinema was operatic; "recent Italian cinema" is much wider a category than the work of Scola, Taviani, and Bertolucci). Still, her book is intriguing and thought provoking, something we most definitely need in the criticism on Italian cinema.

MAURIZIO VIANO

■ Maurizio Viano teaches at Wellesley College.

The Cinema of Jean Genet

Un Chant d'amour

By Jane Giles. London: British Film Institute, 1991. $29.95 cloth; $12.95 paper.

Jane Giles' *The Cinema of Jean Genet: Un Chant d'amour* is a noteworthy attempt to clarify Genet's work in the cinema. Although Giles briefly summarizes the six film scripts on which Genet reportedly worked, the book focuses on the 25-minute silent short, *Un Chant d'amour* (1950), the only film that he directed. There was no script for the film, which Genet improvised, based upon a creative vision that he had for his "scenario." In the book's first chapter, Giles discusses Genet's involvement with the cinema. The information is thorough, including a list of the adaptations of his plays and novels into film, and his cinema appearances. The next section of the book traces the production history of *Un Chant d'amour*. For the first time, we learn of the history of Genet's relationship with Nico Papatakis, the owner of La Rose Rouge, a Montmartre cabaret that Genet frequented after World War II. Papatakis allotted the upper floor of his nightclub for the filming and financed the project. The chapter also provides a pertinent exhibition history of the erotic film and its problems with the censors in the United States, France, and Great Britain.

The third chapter offers an accurate and objective shot-by-shot breakdown of the entire film. In chapter 4, Giles traces significant motifs and images in the film to antecedents in Genet's novels and plays, but her comparison of narrative structure in the film with its foreshadowing in the novels is far too simplistic. She is more thorough in delineating the elements in Genet's fiction that are later found in the film's eroticization of the cell-wall motif. However, the section on Genet's multifaceted erotic identification with flowers is much too demanding and is not nearly as precise as the treatment Richard N. Coe gave the subject in his seminal study, *The Vision of Jean Genet*. The last part of the chapter discusses Genet's political and racial concerns in the film by delving into his association with the Black Panthers and his work on *Les Nègres*.

The appendixes, the most valuable part of this book, provide insightful new information for Genet scholars. Particularly significant is the interview Giles held with Papatakis on October 2, 1987, which provides details about the legal rights to *Un Chant d'amour*, its production and shooting history, as well as anecdotes about Genet's other films. Although the book has several proofreading and editing gaffes that are somewhat irritating to Genet purists, overall Giles succeeds in her goal of establishing the credibility of *Un Chant d'amour* as serious artistry

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rather than as pornography targeted for private collectors. She provides the most thorough, informative treatment of the film to date.

GENE A. PLUNKA

■ Gene A. Plunka teaches in the English Department at Memphis State University.

Film and Politics in America

A Social Tradition

By Brian Neve. New York: Routledge, 1992. $69.95 cloth; $16.95 paper.

Writing about the political significance of Hollywood film is a problematic process, fraught with intellectual pitfalls. One danger for the critic lies in overinterpretation—constructing levels of political and cultural import far beyond what can be gleaned from the action or dialogue on the screen (e.g., linking *E.T.*'s affirmation of innocence with the disingenuous political platitudes of the early Reagan years or turning a pedestrian 1990s violent genre film into a complex commentary on postmodern capitalism). Another is reducing the contested and varied meanings of the films into a set of facile political and social categories (e.g., treating *The Deer Hunter* as simply a patriotic and "reactionary" film or *Viva Zapata* as an anti-Communist screed).

Brian Neve has written a book that avoids these critical perils, and provides a cogent, clear, jargon-free exploration of the work of a generation of American directors who came to Hollywood from the politically conscious and radical New York theater of the 1930s. The directors—Welles, Rossen, Kazan, Polonsky, Huston, Dassin, Dmytryk—despite some cooperation (Rossen and Polonsky working together on *Body and Soul*), never evolved into a group. What these very different directors loosely shared was a commitment to making films that were consciously political and social. And Neve seamlessly utilizes a mix of primary (interviews and archival material) and secondary sources to analyze many of the key films and place them in the context of social and political change (the Depression, the Cold War) and structural shifts in the film industry.

What is most distinctive about Neve's book is his discussion of how radical writers (e.g., John Howard Lawson, Donald Ogden Stewart) and directors informed a number of films from the late 1930s through the war and early postwar years with a touch of a left critique. For example, Robert Rossen's script for *The Sea Wolf* (1941) moved away from Jack London's emphasis on social Darwinism in the novel to an evocation of "feelings of helplessness associated with the Depression years, and a sense of optimism and struggle—class struggle." And dedicated, orthodox Communist Party member John Howard Lawson's wartime scripts for films like *Sahara* (1943) and *Counter-Attack* (1945) emphasized the heroism of the unit collective rather than the intrepid actions of a single individual. Wartime and especially postwar films also cautiously paid greater attention to issues like anti-Semitism and racism (e.g., *Crossfire*, *Lost Boundaries*, *Pinky*). Neve, however, never exaggerates the effect of the radicals on Hollywood films. They were men who, for the most part, lacked a radical aesthetic and were at ease churning out genre films for the studios, often with banal social messages tacked on. And though a genuine left political perspective was almost impossible to insert in the films they worked on, they were still key figures in helping bring about the triumph of liberal political culture in 1940s Hollywood. (It helped that the Communist Party's Popular Front rhetoric and tactics during that period consciously blurred the differences between liberalism and leftism.)

Some of Neve's most penetrating writing deals with the social ramifications of *film noir*. He discusses Warren Susman and Philip Kemp's notion that *film noir* consciously and unconsciously "represented a kind of reemergence of a suppressed element of American culture"—a vision of a fragmented, class-divided, cash-driven, corrupt society. Neve takes this insight and explores how left directors felt that *film noir*'s expressionist effects and thriller elements gave them the freedom to project their political themes without alienating their audience. For example, Marxist director Abraham Polonsky's *Force of Evil* (1948) explicitly views America as a criminal society, but it is subsumed within a crime melodrama narrative and a great deal of *noirish* imagery.

Neve avoids being schematic in his discussion of *film noir*, making clear that the relationship between the films and the "national zeitgeist" is an ambiguous and tentative one. He holds that it is much simpler to discover the repeated motifs of *film noir* than to define their precise relationship to the political and social climate of the 1940s. Neve's unwillingness to indulge in facile generalization and overinterpretation also holds for his readings of individual films. He views *The Big Clock*'s (1948) political critique of both dictatorship and the need for modern man to become subservient to the organization as secondary to the film's light comic tone and the murder mystery at the center of its narrative.

Most of Neve's film readings are both keenly aware of the different levels of meaning that films can operate on

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Brian Neve has written a book that avoids these critical perils, and provides a cogent, clear, jargon-free exploration of the work of a generation of American directors who came to Hollywood from the politically conscious and radical New York theater of the 1930s. The directors—Welles, Rossen, Kazan, Polonsky, Huston, Dassin, Dmytryk—despite some cooperation (Rossen and Polonsky working together on *Body and Soul*), never evolved into a group. What these very different directors loosely shared was a commitment to making films that were consciously political and social. And Neve seamlessly utilizes a mix of primary (interviews and archival material) and secondary sources to analyze many of the key films and place them in the context of social and political change (the Depression, the Cold War) and structural shifts in the film industry.

What is most distinctive about Neve's book is his discussion of how radical writers (e.g., John Howard Lawson, Donald Ogden Stewart) and directors informed a number of films from the late 1930s through the war and early postwar years with a touch of a left critique. For example, Robert Rossen's script for *The Sea Wolf* (1941) moved away from Jack London's emphasis on social Darwinism in the novel to an evocation of "feelings of helplessness associated with the Depression years, and a sense of optimism and struggle—class struggle." And dedicated, orthodox Communist Party member John Howard Lawson's wartime scripts for films like *Sahara* (1943) and *Counter-Attack* (1945) emphasized the heroism of the unit collective rather than the intrepid actions of a single individual. Wartime and especially postwar films also cautiously paid greater attention to issues like anti-Semitism and racism (e.g., *Crossfire*, *Lost Boundaries*, *Pinky*). Neve, however, never exaggerates the effect of the radicals on Hollywood films. They were men who, for the most part, lacked a radical aesthetic and were at ease churning out genre films for the studios, often with banal social messages tacked on. And though a genuine left political perspective was almost impossible to insert in the films they worked on, they were still key figures in helping bring about the triumph of liberal political culture in 1940s Hollywood. (It helped that the Communist Party's Popular Front rhetoric and tactics during that period consciously blurred the differences between liberalism and leftism.)

Some of Neve's most penetrating writing deals with the social ramifications of *film noir*. He discusses Warren Susman and Philip Kemp's notion that *film noir* consciously and unconsciously "represented a kind of reemergence of a suppressed element of American culture"—a vision of a fragmented, class-divided, cash-driven, corrupt society. Neve takes this insight and explores how left directors felt that *film noir*'s expressionist effects and thriller elements gave them the freedom to project their political themes without alienating their audience. For example, Marxist director Abraham Polonsky's *Force of Evil* (1948) explicitly views America as a criminal society, but it is subsumed within a crime melodrama narrative and a great deal of *noirish* imagery.

Neve avoids being schematic in his discussion of *film noir*, making clear that the relationship between the films and the "national zeitgeist" is an ambiguous and tentative one. He holds that it is much simpler to discover the repeated motifs of *film noir* than to define their precise relationship to the political and social climate of the 1940s. Neve's unwillingness to indulge in facile generalization and overinterpretation also holds for his readings of individual films. He views *The Big Clock*'s (1948) political critique of both dictatorship and the need for modern man to become subservient to the organization as secondary to the film's light comic tone and the murder mystery at the center of its narrative.

Most of Neve's film readings are both keenly aware of the different levels of meaning that films can operate on

and conscious of the role cinematic form plays in conveying a film's point of view. Where he can be faulted is his tendency to provide a bit too much plot detail and to write about too many films, where more of an in-depth critique of major, representative ones, like his illuminating analysis of the use of language in *Force of Evil*, would have been more rewarding. He is also too given to alluding to other critics, often ones less perceptive than he is. But Neve has written a consistently intelligent, informative book about a subject where the film's text is usually sacrificed to the critic's intellectual inventiveness or the ideological imperatives of his perspective.

LEONARD QUART

■ Leonard Quart teaches at the College of Staten Island and is one of the editors of *Cineaste*.

Film and Reform

John Grierson and the Documentary Film Movement

By Ian Aitken. New York: Routledge, 1990. $54.50 cloth; $18.95 paper.

The early 1990s have already proven a watershed in the development of sophisticated theorizing about documentary film. Exhibit A is Bill Nichols' *Representing Reality*, the culminating work of a contemporary theorist. Exhibit B is Ian Aitken's study of John Grierson. *Film and Reform* exemplifies the kind of revisionary history that we've come to take for granted in studies of early cinema and of narrative film. But it is above all a thorough setting forth of the intellectual sources and context of Grierson's ideas such as Dudley Andrew, David Bordwell, and Noël Carroll have offered for classical theorists like Eisenstein and Bazin. This is must reading for anyone interested in film theory and documentary history.

"A central argument of this book," Aitken writes in his introduction, "is that Grierson's epistemology, ontology, aesthetic, and political philosophy, were primarily derived from a tradition of philosophical idealism which he encountered at Glasgow University between 1919 and 1924." (15) This is not an easy argument to summarize briefly, but let me try.

Aitken argues that Grierson subscribed to an idealist ontology that distinguished between an absolute, abstract reality and the phenomenal, everyday reality which it encompasses and shapes. These two levels of reality are profoundly unified. In fact, Grierson's epistemology stems from idealism's tenet that concrete, everyday reality provides us with the only means of understanding abstract reality, even if it grants us merely a fragmentary purchase on it. The restricted view of absolute reality we gain through the concrete world accords well with Grierson's idealist tenet that individuals can comprehend abstract reality through intuitive rather than rational processes.

These beliefs about the nature of reality and how we know it are the crucial preconditions for Grierson's encounter with the arguments of political scientists like Walter Lippmann, John Dewey, and C. A. Ellwood that citizens are too irrational and ill-informed to govern their own affairs. For in response, Grierson developed an aesthetic that sought to use "non-rational" representations of everyday reality to enlighten the "irrational" citizen about the fundamental unities at work in the world. In particular, if one exploited film's ability to capture phenomenal reality (on location and with amateur actors) and its resources of montage, one's film (narrative or non-narrative) could demonstrate the integral relationship of the individual to the social whole, and of society to underlying, abstract reality.

Aitken presents his case thoroughly and accessibly, and with ample illustrations. Though he does at times seem to be surfing along a smorgasbord of philosophical traditions and though he doesn't give every thinker cited his due, he usually takes the time to unpack the philosophical traditions Grierson draws upon. As a result, one can return to Grierson's original writings enriched with the ability to read between the lines of his sometimes vague, allusive prose.

The major achievement of this book is its careful placing of Grierson's thinking on documentary in its intellectual context, but one can equally admire Aitken's attention to the social, economic, and political settings which guided Grierson to select and elaborate on his philosophical tenets. These include the way the Scottish economy's destruction at the turn of the century influenced Grierson's parents into social activism, and how the development of an industrialized mass society encouraged the development of elitist political prescriptions in America. Most pertinent, of course, is the institutional context in which Grierson, with "the air of a tough little terrier," tried to lead the units at the Empire Marketing Board and the General Post Office.

Aitken is particularly illuminating in describing the ambivalence of the British Government over both state-funded companies and propaganda policy after the watershed of World War I and the government's fears that a state propaganda unit might foment social dissatisfaction. Though Aitken devotes less space to such factors, his use

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of primary archival research represents a marvelous demonstration of the dialectical relationship between social formations and ideologies. Grierson emerges as a product of his times rather than a transcendent "father" of documentary.

One may be perturbed that Aitken's portrait of American cinema in the 1920s, in which Grierson first articulated his film aesthetic, is hopelessly outdated in its reliance on Benjamin Hampton rather than, say, Douglas Gomery's *The Hollywood Studio System.* Aitken also fails to appreciate how Grierson's preference for clear storytelling embodied a full accordance with Hollywood form. One might also wish that Aitken had engaged more fully with the writings of Peter Morris, the only other scholar to examine Grierson's intellectual heritage in recent years, or that he had analyzed the Grierson unit's films more closely. And some of the writing is repetitive. Yet *Film and Reform* renews the discussion of Grierson's ideas and achievements with remarkable rigor and extraordinary insight. Aitken's analysis of philosophical idealism enriches our understanding of documentary theory's past; it also provides us with new perspectives to engage and embrace its future.

MATTHEW BERNSTEIN

■ Matthew Bernstein teaches at Emory University.

"It's Time for My Story"

Soap Opera Sources, Structure, and Response

By Carol Traynor Williams.
Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992. $47.95.

Serious soap-opera criticism divides roughly into two categories. Muriel Cantor and Suzanne Pingree established the social-science model by classifying types that interested them—such as professional women, philandering husbands, and overweight people—and counting up the frequency of their occurrence in daytime serial communities. Tania Modleski and Robert Clyde Allen put soap opera on the map of media criticism with approaches that theorize soap opera as a gendered discourse with its own poetics. Carol Traynor Williams' study, *"It's Time for My Story,"* uneasily combines these two methodologies. Although Williams joins the encouragingly growing number of critics who endorse soap operas as a genuine feminine narrative, she tends toward itemization rather than theory.

Williams emphasizes soap opera's genuine pleasures for women in her consideration of the sources for, structure of, and response to soap opera, but she rejects Modleski and Allen (and his partners in *Channels of Discourse*, Sandy Flitterman-Lewis and E. Ann Kaplan)—"What do these feminists want?" Williams wonders. (8) Rather, she relies initially on such diverse and patriarchal predecessors as Gilbert Seldes, Vladimir Propp, and Peter Brooks for validation of her enthusiasm for daytime serials and for her critical models. To sound a positive opening note, she quotes Seldes' prescient observation in 1950 that radio serials had "evolved a technique of narration as skillful as that of Joseph Conrad and, in its way, as complex." (2) As the pivot of her section on sources, Williams uses Propp's morphology of fairy tales to classify the content of soap-opera narrative: i.e., Propp's category of narrative helpers, princesses, kings is applied to a selection of soap operas. At the same time, she points out random interfaces between soap operas and Brooks' definition of melodrama.

Ad-hoc itemization characterizes Williams' discussion of structure, a section of the book that weaves among synopses of characters and situations in search of archetypal configurations, two of which are identified as "Bitches and Bastards," returning suddenly to Propp and abandoning him again just as suddenly. In the final section on response, Williams itemizes instances of audience reaction in the tradition of Janice Radway's surveys of romance readers. Interspersed with these discussions are excerpts from several interesting interviews with Agnes Nixon, writer/creator of three on-air soap operas, and Sally Sussman, an innovator who attempted to augment the presence of black families in daytime soaps.

Williams' enthusiasm is evident in the torrent of encyclopedic detail in this study. However, the lightning speed with which she covers a large number of stories and characters may bewilder all but those readers as well read in soap opera as she is, since she rarely contextualizes the particulars. Similarly dizzying is the speed with which Williams moves among analytical approaches, flying over the complexities therein. For example, in using Propp and Brooks, Williams does not consider their exclusive involvement in narrative forms that emphasize closure. Can Propp's categories be pertinent to years of narrative that deform and reconfigure all original character networks? Since Brooks includes in his inventory of the essential characteristics of melodrama "moral polarization," "*final* reward of virtue," and suspense, (61) we are left wondering how the final reward of virtue can occur in a narrative with no final moment and what moral polarization means when there is no closure to fix any polarization. And how can melodramatic suspense, a

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narrative function so conventionally tied to a terminal moment, operate when there is no narrative terminus?

Williams remains questionable when she moves on to audience response. Showing little interest in the literature that theorizes about the spectatorial position, she opts instead for the canvassing of specific populations, her favorite being college students. Since Williams is aware of the difficulty involved in collecting and assessing anecdotal material, she forces no definitive conclusions. However, it is not clear to what end her interviews may lead. Quoting a student who laughingly wishes she had the "gusto" of Alexis of "Dynasty" because she would like to "kick people around and get ahead," Williams finds "the right, vital, intelligent note on which to focus soap audiences study." (195) The student's vitality is apparent, but Williams' appreciation of her desire, uncontextualized by consistent theory, confuses the reader as to what she means here by "right" or "intelligent."

MARTHA NOCHIMSON

■ Martha Nochimson is the author of *No End to Her: Soap Opera and the Female Subject* (University of California Press, 1993).

Laws of Desire

Questions of Homosexuality in Spanish Writing and Film, 1960–1990.

By Paul Julian Smith. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. $59.00 cloth; $17.95 paper.

In his introduction to *Laws of Desire*, Smith sets out to investigate a number of issues related to the question of homosexual desire and representation in contemporary Spanish literature and film. One of his aims is "to introduce a new and challenging subject area into Hispanic studies" (9) through the close textual analysis of six writers and film-makers during the period 1960 to 1990. He also attempts to position the material as an important consideration for scholars of lesbian and gay studies, claiming that gay and lesbian studies models like those of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Jonathan Dollimore "might be modified by an awareness of cultures such as the Hispanic which cannot be confined to the straitjacket of a Euro-american same" when "'proximate' nationalities and sexualities 'track back' into dominant cultures with which they are coterminous." (12) Although this aspect of the project does not consider work done by ethnic studies scholars in the United States or work such as Homi Bhaba's *Nation and Narration* (Routledge, 1990) and the recent *Nationalities and Sexualities*, edited by Andrew Parker (Routledge, 1992), Smith utilizes familiar poststructuralist models as his primary theoretical framework.

The book is divided into an introduction, five chapters, and a coda on Almodóvar's film *¡Atame! (Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!)* which serves as analysis of the film and the conclusion to the study. The first chapter deals with the literary work of Rosa Chacel, Juan Goytisolo, and Terenci Moix in relation to autobiography, and follows more or less the question of gay identity as outlined in Jonathan Dollimore's *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford University Press, 1991). A gay identity which seeks an essential and unified self is exemplified by Chacel; a fragmented identity which yearns or is nostalgic for an essential and unified self is represented in Goytisolo; and gay identity which constructs itself as plural and noncentered is seen in the work of Moix. Utilizing discussions of essentialism and constructionism in gay and lesbian studies, the first chapter forms the basic thesis for the entire book. Smith analyzes the selected literary and filmic texts in relation to the way in which the discrete texts exemplify these differing modes of subjectivity.

Chapter 2 treats the work of Juan Goytisolo, one of Spain's most internationally well-known authors and one who deals with the subject of homosexuality, and chapter 3 analyzes Esther Tusquets's trilogy of novels on lesbianism. While chapter 2 uses psychoanalytic theory, primarily that of Guy Hocquenghem and Gilles Deleuze, as its primary framework, this section uses Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 1990) as its critical model, and compares Tusquets's work to that of French lesbian theorist and novelist Monique Wittig. Smith's comparison of Tusquets's work to that of Wittig is primarily derived from Butler's discussion of Wittig. Just as, according to Smith, Goytisolo's nostalgia for an originary identity cedes to a continuing drift, in Deleuze's terms, away from the origin, Tusquets's lesbian trilogy comes "to designate plurality and diffuseness" and represent "the necessary quest for the impossible object of the feminary." (128) Although suggestive, Smith's treatment of Goytisolo's and Tusquets's respective trilogies is not as clearly and carefully articulated as their work warrants. His overreliance on theoretical frameworks without adequately historicizing or contextualizing them results in readings in which the text is made to fit the theory rather than being illuminated by it.

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Chapter 4 discusses three films directed by Eloy de Iglesia as representative of Spain in the transition of Franco's dictatorship to democracy. The analysis takes into consideration such factors as class, national politics, and regional identity. For Smith, de Iglesia's cinema is an example of "a nostalgia for the family and the reproduction of the real" which becomes "rendered impossible by his continuing commitment to the representation of gay men." (162) Utilizing both genre theory and placing the films in their historical and political context, Smith provides a reading of the films which would be of interest to both Hispanists and nonspecialists in the area.

The last chapter and the coda analyze the work of Pedro Almodóvar in terms of its national and international reception and in relation to current gay and lesbian theory. The most interesting aspect of these chapters is the discussion of Almodóvar's work in terms of its critical and commercial reception in Spain and the way in which it investigates the cinematic positioning of the spectator. Again, as in other chapters, Smith's unproblematized use of sources such as Richard Dyer's *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film* (Routledge, 1990), which he uses to make a comparison between Almodóvar's work and that of Warhol, often weakens his analysis.

Because of its ambitious scope, *Laws of Desire* does not live up to the expectations it sets for itself. As a text which purports to introduce Hispanists to gay and lesbian critical theory, its overuse of theory and its generally uncritical and unelaborated use of theoretical models defeats its purpose. For non-Hispanists, and particularly for scholars in gay and lesbian studies, Smith never really makes a case for why and how these texts would be an important intervention in current theoretical discussions. In fact, the analyses provided only demonstrate the way in which these texts conform to current theoretical models, not how they differ from or problematize them in any significant way. But for a very limited audience of Hispanists already versed in critical theory and its intersection with gay and lesbian studies, Smith's book might prove of interest.

CHRISTOPHER ORTIZ

■ Christopher Ortiz is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Film and Television at UCLA.

Middletown

The Making of a Documentary Series

By Dwight W. Hoover. New York: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1992. $65.00 cloth; $20.00 paper.

"The making of . . . " is a popular formula for books about Hollywood blockbusters, but its more academic counterpart—the case study—is far less common and almost never applied to documentaries. This examination of the Middletown Film Project—which resulted in a six-part documentary series produced by Peter Davis, shot in Muncie, Indiana, and partially funded by the NEH and the Xerox corporation—is badly needed and a valuable contribution to the growing literature on nonfiction film-making. The recent politics of production and financing for independent documentaries, which are, almost without exception, designed for airing on PBS, is crucial for all interested in the future of American film culture, but it has been little analyzed outside the pages of *The Independent*, the monthly magazine published by the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers.

The *Middletown* series comprises an important group of films that varied in quality and in some cases provoked controversy. Shooting began in 1979 during the Carter administration and five of the programs were aired during the Reagan era, early in 1982. The sixth, *Seventeen*, made by Joel De Mott and Jeff Kreines, angered many Muncie residents, who found it to be an embarrassing portrait of local high-school youth; it was ultimately barred from a PBS broadcast by the determined efforts of the PBS head, Larry Grossman.

The controversy around *Seventeen,* which probes the lives of teenagers rebelling against convention and authority by smoking, drinking, and, in the case of young white girls, hanging out with black basketball players, proves to be only the tip of the iceberg: there was a long-developing battle between the academics on one hand and the film-makers on the other. Peter Davis, director of the Academy-Award-winning *Hearts and Minds* (1974), wanted to make a documentary series about a small, Midwestern American city. He hoped to avoid Muncie, Indiana, which he considered overly studied: its citizens and institutions had presumably become savvy and self-conscious about their role as Middletown, USA—a result of the path-breaking studies by Helen and Robert Lynd in 1929 and 1937. Instead, Davis wanted to look at Hamilton, Ohio, which became the locale for his book-length portrait *Hometown* (1982). But funding sources decreed otherwise: they wanted the visibility and significance that Middletown gave them. Davis reversed course and ended

Chapter 4 discusses three films directed by Eloy de Iglesia as representative of Spain in the transition of Franco's dictatorship to democracy. The analysis takes into consideration such factors as class, national politics, and regional identity. For Smith, de Iglesia's cinema is an example of "a nostalgia for the family and the reproduction of the real" which becomes "rendered impossible by his continuing commitment to the representation of gay men." (162) Utilizing both genre theory and placing the films in their historical and political context, Smith provides a reading of the films which would be of interest to both Hispanists and nonspecialists in the area.

The last chapter and the coda analyze the work of Pedro Almodóvar in terms of its national and international reception and in relation to current gay and lesbian theory. The most interesting aspect of these chapters is the discussion of Almodóvar's work in terms of its critical and commercial reception in Spain and the way in which it investigates the cinematic positioning of the spectator. Again, as in other chapters, Smith's unproblematized use of sources such as Richard Dyer's *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film* (Routledge, 1990), which he uses to make a comparison between Almodóvar's work and that of Warhol, often weakens his analysis.

Because of its ambitious scope, *Laws of Desire* does not live up to the expectations it sets for itself. As a text which purports to introduce Hispanists to gay and lesbian critical theory, its overuse of theory and its generally uncritical and unelaborated use of theoretical models defeats its purpose. For non-Hispanists, and particularly for scholars in gay and lesbian studies, Smith never really makes a case for why and how these texts would be an important intervention in current theoretical discussions. In fact, the analyses provided only demonstrate the way in which these texts conform to current theoretical models, not how they differ from or problematize them in any significant way. But for a very limited audience of Hispanists already versed in critical theory and its intersection with gay and lesbian studies, Smith's book might prove of interest.

CHRISTOPHER ORTIZ

■ Christopher Ortiz is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Film and Television at UCLA.

Middletown

The Making of a Documentary Series

By Dwight W. Hoover. New York: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1992. $65.00 cloth; $20.00 paper.

"The making of . . . " is a popular formula for books about Hollywood blockbusters, but its more academic counterpart—the case study—is far less common and almost never applied to documentaries. This examination of the Middletown Film Project—which resulted in a six-part documentary series produced by Peter Davis, shot in Muncie, Indiana, and partially funded by the NEH and the Xerox corporation—is badly needed and a valuable contribution to the growing literature on nonfiction film-making. The recent politics of production and financing for independent documentaries, which are, almost without exception, designed for airing on PBS, is crucial for all interested in the future of American film culture, but it has been little analyzed outside the pages of *The Independent*, the monthly magazine published by the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers.

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up joining forces with a group of scholars seeking to translate into filmic form the findings from a recent restudy of Muncie. This series of books, called "Middletown III," was hardly "politically correct." It was headed by Theodore Caplow, a conservative sociologist who, in contrast to the Lynds, believed the system was working; he hired two Mormons from Brigham Young University as his chief associates. Such are the contradictions of capitalism and NEH funding.

Dwight W. Hoover, who taught history at Muncie's Ball State University, was loosely affiliated with "Middletown III" and ultimately became the project director for the planned documentary. But the project needed someone like Peter Davis who could provide the kind of high profile that would enable the *Middletown* series to get funded. Their collaboration was a marriage of convenience, and in this odd couple—Hoover occupied the political middle ground, Davis was on the liberal end of the left spectrum—Davis quickly became the dominant partner, taking over Hoover's post as project director. Hoover became more and more marginalized and was predictably frustrated with the results. In retrospect he wanted something more like the Ken Burns historical documentary series on the Civil War—a series that would have compared present-day Muncie with the city studied by the Lynds. This disappointment ultimately led Hoover to write this book. As one might expect, he is often unhappy with what Davis did, though in the end he directs his severest criticisms at Kreines and De Mott.

Davis sought to produce a series of films in the cinéma-vérité style that had been elaborated in the 1960s and early 1970s, when he was making more conventionally styled documentaries for CBS (*Hunger in America* and *The Selling of the Pentagon).* He hired Richard Leacock, who made *Community of Praise*, and two of Leacock's proteges, De Mott and Kreines. Tom Cohen, who worked on *Hearts and Minds* as an associate producer, directed two episodes of the *Middletown* series, one on the local mayoral campaign and another, *Family Business*, on a struggling restaurant entrepreneur with a pizza franchise. Davis directed one episode himself, *The Second Time Around*, which looks at the marriage of a couple who had both been previously divorced. The weakest one, *The Big Game*, was directed by E. J. Vaughn and looked at high-school basketball. Two of these films were derivative of cinéma-vérité classics: *The Big Game* of *Football (Fowler vs. Mooney)* (James Lipscomb, 1961) and *The Campaign* of *Primary* (1960), both made at Drew Associates. *Family Business* is a compelling look at family patriarch Howie Snider, a former Lieutenant Colonel in the Marines and Vietnam veteran, who tries to keep the family business going—a poignant and painful film when seen in the early Reagan era with its upbeat emphasis on opportunity and free enterprise.

Hoover's goal is to be evenhanded in his analyses while making clear his reservations with the way the series turned out. In this he succeeds, though in the end he comes off as naïve if well-intentioned. His chief complaints are two fold. First, the use of "Middletown" implies typicality by its very name and yet the filmmakers focused on subjects that were not typical. Of course, within academia, categories such as class, gender, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation have problematized (to put it gently) the notion that anyone can be seen as typical. For the *Community of Praise* segment, Hoover wanted to weave together three families and three different denominations (a Methodist, a Baptist, and perhaps a black Pentecostal church) to show how religion was practiced in Muncie. (Catholics of any color didn't quite make the cut.) Leacock threw out all the academic treatments and chose to focus on the Tobey family, which was looking for a new religious home and so visited a number of different churches in their quest. The Tobeys are seekers, even though their son Noel was skeptical of his parents' piety. The family may not be typical of Muncie but their quietly desperate odyssey says a lot about America and religion in the late twentieth century.

Hoover's other, related complaint is that the films do not provide viewers with sufficient context and that this is an inherent weakness of cinéma vérité. This may be an accurate assessment of the films but there are other means of contextualization: teaching guides, press releases and reviews, television wraparounds, the Middletown studies, and Hoover's book provide contexts outside the films that may be more useful. Certainly Hoover is good at pointing out those situations where crucial parts of an episode's story were left out— such as Howie Snider's drinking or the bickering within the local Democratic Party that allowed for a Republican victory in the mayoral election, even though the Democratic candidate was much more charismatic (an unexpected reversal of the outcome in *Primary*).

Hoover, a sociologist, lacks a firm grasp of documentary history, theory, or practice. He fails to recognize that *Seventeen* resonates with a number of 1960s documentaries about high-school students, such as *Sixteen in Webster Groves* (Arthur Barron, 1966) and *High School* (Frederick Wiseman, 1969). *High School*, in particular, encountered many of the same difficulties and negative reactions as *Seventeen,* yet it is now generally revered as a classic documentary. *Seventeen* evokes that tradition, but unlike *The Big Game,* it is innovative, dynamic and revealing. *Seventeen* was blocked from television broadcast but was widely shown on the festival circuit, where it was very well received. (Hoover attributes this success to a Kreines-De Mott press release that he finds manipulative, self-serving, and ultimately dishonest. If only press releases could be that effective!)

Four of the *Middletown* films are about groups of people who are trying to make sense of their lives and to find a meaningful place in the world. In fact, they challenge the assertions of Caplow and associates that Muncie has become a more traditional and stable place to live. If Hoover often misses the mark in evaluating the strengths and limitations of these films, he is at least able to acknowledge and even present the other side of the argument. And he concludes thus: "I must also say that I still consider the Middletown Film Project to be a valuable contribution to community studies. It is, in its own way, as much a landmark as was *Middletown* or *All Faithful People*, and, like the two books, will be more valued as time passes. . . . What remains will be a visual record of how Munsonians behaved and thought at the beginning of the decade of the 1980s."

Hoover may be an awkward critic of documentaries (and would probably have been a disastrous project director for this series), but he appears to be a quite admirable sociologist. This book presents a wealth of information about the process of making these documentaries, about the differing reception of the series, and about what happened to the participants behind and in front of the camera in the intervening ten years. He gives us that rare, no-holds barred report from the inside. This is a case study worth pursuing, perhaps in the classroom as a module for a course on contemporary American documentary. (Since the book came out, these films have become available through First Run Features, in New York City.) It should also be invaluable reading for any individual associated with an aspiring documentary film project, in whatever capacity. In the end, Hoover has done a good deed and deserves our heartfelt appreciation.

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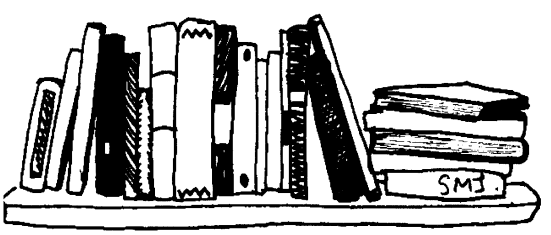

Movies for the Masses

Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s

By Denise J. Youngblood. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992. $49.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

During the 1920s in the Soviet Union, "nearly as many American as Soviet films were shown" (944 American to 971 Soviet). Furthermore, while American films were edited in three to seven days, Soviet films of the 1920s often took 90 to 100 days and spent a tenth as much on screenplays—the basis of a film—as did American films. Such careful and fascinating attention to detail characterizes Denise J. Youngblood's important followup of her earlier work, *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era, 1918–1935* (University of Texas Press, 1991). The result is that *Movies for the Masses* goes beyond her previous research to claim our attention for at least four significant reasons.

First, her central thesis is clearly stated and more than successfully supported: "The film culture of the NEP (New Economic Policy) was predominantly and aggressively 'bourgeois.'" Such a focus takes Youngblood beyond the narrowly defined aesthetically oriented film studies of such acknowledged masters as Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Vertov into the realm of cultural and popular culture studies. Thus, in orientation, *Movies for the Masses* holds an important position in a new movement within Russian and Soviet studies in general to understand the workings and significance of popular and/or so-called mass culture—as explored on a more broadly based study in Richard Stites' *Soviet Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society in Russia Since 1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1992). Youngblood convincingly explores Soviet cinema of the 1920s as a period of great social and cultural upheaval in which the tastes and orientations of film-makers and audiences alike continued to be shaped by pre-Revolutionary "bourgeois" cinematic forms and *inostranshchina* (foreign) films—especially American.

Such a culturally based study leads Youngblood to a second level of distinction: mass culture is not the same as popular culture. We in film studies have, of course, heard for so long that Eisenstein, Vertov, and the other avant-garde Russian film-makers wished to build a mass culture in tune with socialist/communist guidelines. But as Youngblood demonstrates in chapter 9, "For Workers and Peasants Only—Factory and Tractor Films," though evidence is not entirely available, what information we do have points to most nonbourgeois audiences finding such films as Eisenstein's *Potemkin* artistically interesting but

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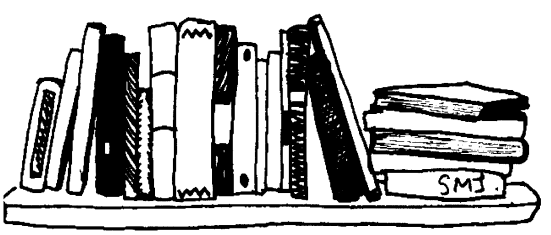

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confusing and boring as actual films. As she quotes one official: "We have no workers' and peasants' cinema. I state this boldly. Let anyone prove otherwise."

To illuminate such a distinction, Youngblood has provided film studies with another service. She has not only brought a large number of previously neglected films into focus again, but she provides us with close-ups of many important films and a very helpful case study of three directors of the 1920s who represent the entire spectrum of the period: Iakov Protazanov (the "Russian Griffith"), Boris Barnet (a dashing boxer/actor turned director of truly Soviet comedy), and Fridrikh Ermler (who helped create social-problem films in works such as *Katka the Apple Seller* [1926]). Furthermore, as a Russian specialist, Youngblood has more thoroughly than anyone else before her gone through the film journals, reviews, and literature of the times not only to illuminate her discussion of the emerging shape of Soviet cinema during the 1920s but also to suggest the important role that film magazines and criticism played in Soviet culture. In this sense, Youngblood furthers the pioneering work of Richard Taylor, especially in his collaboration with Ian Christie, *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema* (Routledge, 1991).

Finally, Youngblood's work is welcome because as a historian rather than a film-studies expert, she exemplifies the interdisciplinary approach to the humanities and cultural studies that we often strive for but so seldom realize in an age of ever increasing specialization. In fact, as the founding president of a scholarly group initially of roughly 30 to 40 Slavic/Soviet/East European professors within the AAASS (American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies) interested in media studies, she has helped create a lively forum for the crossfertilization of film/media studies and Soviet/East European studies.

The experimentation of the 1920s culminated in the so-called Cultural Revolution of the late 1920s. The purges that resulted ended the careers of many film-makers who had tried to balance popular cinema forms with the demands from "above" for a mass cinema. And so the road towards Socialist Realism was paved, beginning in 1934. But even on this point Youngblood rightfully cautions us against dismissing the 1930s as a dull wasteland of Stalinist fare, for Stalin was an avid film lover and many of his favorite films, especially the musicals of Alexandrov, were strongly influenced by American and popular forms. Yet the 1930s cinema, as Youngblood notes, deserves a volume which is still waiting to be written.

Film-studies experts may read Youngblood wishing for a more theoretical perspective or a closer awareness of cinema-studies approaches to film analysis. But Youngblood offers us so much more (and she herself makes no claim of employing cinema-studies theory) that to quibble is to miss the value of this fine work. A parting observation: Youngblood is so accurate in capturing the bureacratic infighting between producers (Sovkino, etc.), film-makers, critics, and audiences, that, once again, we marvel that *any* successful films— from Boris Barnet's *The Girl with the Hatbox* (1927) to Iakov Protazanov's "Mezhrabpom" films such as *Don Diego and Pelogeia* (1927/28)—ever got made. After all, the impossible demands on creating good heroes for films meant that "villains were far more interesting than heroes." (97)

ANDREW HORTON

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at Loyola University in New Orleans.

Narrative Comprehension and Film

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Edward Branigan's closely argued analysis of narrative comprehension in the cinema is a strong demonstration of the value of a cognitive approach in film studies. Although Branigan reviews existing narrative theories in the course of his argument, his main task is to rethink, from a cognitive standpoint, the manner by which film narratives can be said to cue interpretive activity by their viewers. His approach goes beyond the familiar antinomies presently established in film theory by textual exegesis and reader-response methods.

Branigan is able to chart a rich new direction by conceiving of narrative not just as a filmic or literary structure but also as a perceptual activity whose goal is the analysis of time and space, the organization and classification of experiential information: "[N]arrative is a perceptual activity that organizes data into a special pattern which represents and explains experience." (3) The value of such a conception is that it allows texts and spectators to intersect. As humanly crafted objects, films will contain a kind of perceptual imprint in their structure which, in turn, invites the search for patterns by viewers. Thus, a dual sense of narrative emerges: the product of storytelling and the nature of its construction and processing by viewers.

Branigan's approach has a second heuristic value: it enables him to sidestep the unproductive line of inquiry of whether film is like a language (and also, therefore, of whether a good narrative theory should be cinematically

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Branigan's approach has a second heuristic value: it enables him to sidestep the unproductive line of inquiry of whether film is like a language (and also, therefore, of whether a good narrative theory should be cinematically

or linguistically based). He sees both film and language as capable of embodying a more general cognitive activity in which people use narrative thinking to analyze their experiences of time and space for causal, orderly patterns. "Both film narrative and written narrative express temporal relationships because both are mental constructions, not because film reduces to language." (17)

For Branigan, story information is a function of what happens (the narrative) and how it is presented to and known by characters and the spectator (the narration). Branigan deals with the "what" aspect in a discussion of narrative schemas, which are culturally based sets of expectations a viewer brings to a narrative that enable the spectator to segment and punctuate the flow of events into a temporally and causally ordered scheme. Narrative schemas are only one way of organizing experience or data. Branigan discusses other methods of associating data, and argues that our experience of such aspects of narrative time as simultaneity, duration, causality, and order can be understood as general affects bound to the relative complexities of these methods.

Lest a reader at this point think that this sounds like suspiciously Kantian transcendentalism, let me emphasize that Branigan's model is sensitive to culture, which, he admits, enters into the values underlying the judgements (schemas) a viewer brings to a film narrative. An excellent analysis of narrative organization in Griffith's *The Girl and Her Trust* clarifies both the cognitive and culturally coded aspects of the viewer's likely responses.

Branigan deals with the second component of story information, the narration, in terms of the way that the text establishes disparities of knowledge distributed among characters in the story and the spectator outside. Narration develops as knowledge of situations and of characters' motives, actions, and desires circulates through the field of action. In a situation where all characters and observers are all-knowing, narration is unneeded. Narration explains and justifies changes in the distribution of knowledge in the story-world. "Narration is ultimately a way of making knowledge 'intermittent' . . . a set of possibilities for controlling time, for regulating our access to a fluctuating field of information." (69) A fine analysis of a series of panels from the "Nick Fury" comic strip demonstrates how narrative causality is a function of rapid changes in the balance of knowledge held by characters and spectator.

Branigan emphasizes that narration is a multi-level process in which several levels (e.g., diegetic, nondiegetic, external character, internal subjective character narrations) may operate simultaneously. Describing narration in terms of logically and structurally discrete levels enables Branigan to sidestep simple structuralism by modeling degrees of flexibility, constraint, and complexity within embedded and hierarchical relations.

Throughout his discussion, Branigan emphasizes that narrative comprehension is *not* strictly a matter of processing the surface features of a text. Pointing out that we forget these features quickly (i.e., films are not remembered by viewers in terms of the camera's positions, angles, or movements), Branigan stresses the importance of higher-level cognitive activities in film comprehension. Filmic narration cues the search for patterns by the spectator and is not strictly a product of the surface features of a text. This conception allows Branigan to formulate a new view of the so-called transparency of classical Hollywood style. This transparency is not to be explained as primarily a matter of formal or visual techniques (surface features), but arises as the viewer's short-term memory of the surface structure is pushed down or consumed by the larger-order perceptual tasks of segmenting and connecting story elements. Branigan points out the well-known phenomenon that even continuity violations can fail to disrupt transparency for the viewer.

Other topics covered by Branigan's analysis include narration and point of view, objective and subjective representation in narrative, and the relation of fiction and narrative.

Branigan's book is a very valuable contribution to the rethinking of film theory and spectatorship currently inspired by the cognitive turn in recent film theory. Unfortunately, for the general reader or for readers with a casual interest in the subject, it may prove to be forbidding because of the largely abstract and closely built nature of the arguments. The work would also have benefited from a clearer presentation of the overall design and structure. Branigan has obviously been thinking about these issues for a long time, and his compact arguments afford little breathing space for the reader. The work might also benefit from fewer lists—the reader learns about the eight components of schemas, the six methods of organizing data, the three types of agency, the eight levels of narration, six features of the invisible observer, and so on. But these are minor quibbles with a book whose difficulties are generally earned by virtue of the complex and cutting-edge issues it grapples with. This is a book that will have lasting value and that should inspire future research. It is a key text in the new wave of cognitive film theory.

STEPHEN PRINCE

■ Stephen Prince teaches at Virginia Tech; he is the Book Review Editor of *Film Quarterly*.

Passions and Deceptions

The Early Films of Ernst Lubitsch

By Sabine Hake. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992. $45.00 cloth; $14.95 paper.

The appearance of a new volume on the works of Ernst Lubitsch is bound to excite memories of sensual and intellectual pleasure. Despite the difficulty of such an unfair challenge, Sabine Hake manages to make her text yield up some pleasures of its own.

Passions and Deceptions could not have come at a better time. As Hake points out, Lubitsch has been rather ignored during the last ten years, a decade marked by a proliferation of feminist film scholarship. Given that Lubitsch films, especially in the silent era, feature independent-minded female protagonists and overt female desire, a feminist reassessment is long overdue.

However, Hake's aims go beyond feminist analysis. In addition to presenting both an overview of his works from the short comedies through *Trouble in Paradise* (1932) and close textual readings of more than a dozen individual films, Hake attempts to come to terms with the uniqueness of Lubitsch's opus by subjecting the works to various methodological approaches—historical, formal, psychoanalytical, political, and cultural, as well as feminist. Some of these methodologies work better than others, and it becomes disconcerting as the ground constantly shifts from chapter to chapter or when Hake handpicks certain methods which seem to prove preconceived points. Such multiple approaches also undermine the premise of auteur scholarship. Why do a director study if each film is approached through a discrete set of issues?

In dealing with one of Lubitsch's first major works, *The Oyster Princess* (1919), Hake diminishes much of the film's original sparkle without providing compensating insights. Hake calls upon this satiric and liberating tale—of an American mercantile "princess" looking to purchase a genuine European prince—to do too much, and sinks it beneath a mountain of theory. However, Hake fares better with *The Doll* (1919), a film about a woman who is able to use her transformation into an object of male desire to turn against that order. Likewise, she offers new readings for *Passion* (1919), although at times she makes assertions without adequate proof, and many of her notions could as easily be argued to the contrary.

In addition to feminism, Hake's main interests in these early chapters are historicism, self-reflexive cinema, and shifting authorial intervention. One of her particular concerns is how formal devices create subversive texts, and she ably elucidates the operative mechanism at work in the text. Hake also makes much of Lubitsch's primitive style, especially a mixture of styles, direct authorial address, visual excess, and what she terms "sheer specularity." All of this is easily substantiated. But what is lacking is a discussion of how these devices inform most of the early cinema or how Lubitsch's use of such techniques differs from that of other early directors.

The second half of the book is a good deal more solid and challenging and, by book's end, Hake manages to pull together all of the disparate elements of her analysis, especially in demonstrating how the self-reflexivity of the early films carries over into the later works. Her discussion of metaphor seems extremely profitable, especially for an understanding of the special qualities associated with Lubitsch, and her connecting of strategems developed in the teens and twenties to the later Hollywood films goes a long way in explaining what has come to be called "the Lubitsch touch."

Finally, her emphasis on Lubitsch's films as a "complicated system of difference, involving narrative elements as well as cinematic representation itself," stands at the heart of the book. Her last chapters chronicle the shifting paradigms of differences—gender, class, and nationality. Although I suspect that difference can be related to all cinema, given its centrality to language and knowledge, her use of this concept does open Lubitsch's works to fresh and multiple readings.

Unfortunately, Hake misses the opportunity to bring into play an understanding of the influences generated by Lubitsch's Jewish background. Not only did it constitute one of the central differences of his life, but it is fundamental in explaining his sensibility, his fascination with class, his rewriting of history, his obsession with forbidden eroticism, and most importantly, his ironic tone, which Hake discusses at great length. She does mention Lubitsch's Jewishness, but mostly in terms of class consciousness, and sees this as a factor only in his earliest comedies. In her last chapter, Hake defines irony as "marking a position both inside and outside the narrative." No better definition could describe the contribution of Jewish art in the twentieth century, from Kafka to Philip Roth or from the Marx Brothers and Ernst Lubitsch to Mel Brooks and Woody Allen. Along with all the other valuable insights Hake provides, I wish she had explored this rich area in more depth.

PATRICIA BRETT ERENS

■ Patricia Brett Erens teaches at Rosary College in Chicago.

Went the Day Well?
By Penelope Houston

Double Indemnity
By Richard Schickel

Stagecoach
By Edward Buscombe

The Wizard of Oz
By Salman Rushdie

All in the "BFI Film Classics" series, edited by Edward Buscombe. London: British Film Institute, 1992. $9.95.

There is a one-page preface printed on the first page of each of these volumes. Headed "BFI Film Classics," it says, in part:

> Cinema is a fragile medium. Many of the great classic films of the past now exist, if at all, in damaged or incomplete prints. Concerned about the deterioration in the physical state of our film heritage, the National Film Archive, a Division of the British Film Institute, has compiled a list of 360 key films in the history of the cinema. The long-term goal of the Archive will be to build a collection of perfect showprints of these films, which will then be screened regularly at the Museum of the Moving Image in London in a year-round repertory. BFI Publishing has now commissioned a series of books to stand alongside these titles. . . .

Information about the archive's laudable project, beyond this sketch, is not to be found in the volumes that have appeared so far, not even concerning the film under discussion in each, in which the state of available prints is not among the topics discussed.

The four BFI books reviewed here are longer than articles but slimmer than monographs as we usually think of them. They average 74 pages overall and (excluding pictures and the occasional table) 62 pages of text. Penelope Houston's volume on *Went the Day Well?* (1942) is the only one of the four that does not seem to enlarge the series' commission—her volume is content to stand, solidly and usefully, alongside the film of her title. She also has no illusions about the importance of the film—"[T]his is not a film of any striking depth or subtlety. What you see, on the whole, is what you get. There are few puzzles of interpretation to be tracked down." Sixty German paratroopers jump into an English village with a mission to disrupt power and communications, in preparation for a full-scale invasion of Britain. Everyone in authority in the village behaves badly, Houston notes, so that the ordinary villagers must make up their own minds and rally to defeat the invaders on their own, which they do. The film went into production during the dark days of 1942, weeks after the fall of Singapore and months before El Alamein, although by the time it was released, in October 1942, the threat of invasion had passed.

The most lively section of the book compares the film with the Graham Greene story on which it was, quite loosely, based. This was a brief item called "The Lieutenant Died Last," in which an old poacher sees ten parachutists coming down from the sky and mistakes them for the "bloody Bojers" of the 40-years-earlier Boer War. "'It didn't seem right,' he said afterwards; he meant that it didn't seem fair, people peeking at you like that out of the sky." So he stalks the Germans and kills them all with his shotgun; afterwards he is not thanked for his actions but is let off with a warning when rabbits are found in his pocket. Displayed here is not only Greene's distinctive irony but also his flair for entertaining as he cautions. Assuming his story could have been stretched, what a better film it would have made, beginning with its title. "The Lieutenant Died Last" baits the narrative hook and involves us immediately in the story's characters. Compare that to *Went the Day Well?*, which sounds literary in a self-conscious way and fails to connect with either the film's narrative or its characters, who seem subordinate in advance to an abstract theme. Alberto Cavalcanti, the film's director, was a friend of Greene's; whether the latter worked on the screenplay at some point, as Ealing Studio head Michael Balcon later claimed, is a mystery Houston pursued diligently but could not solve. Greene claimed never to have seen the film, but remarks of his here and there indicate he preferred his own version. Houston's final frustration in this matter was the death of Greene before she could ask him.

Richard Schickel's book on *Double Indemnity* is a disappointment. Research, perspective, enthusiasm—all seem pedestrian here; even the writing seems arduous. The fine insights and flowing sentences of the author's *The Disney Version* and *His Picture in the Papers* are sadly missing.

Schickel begins with an offhand remark on the film by Woody Allen and belabors it for three pages. Then he cites Edmund Wilson's 1940 essay on Hollywood writers—"The Boys in the Back Room"—and argues with it for five pages. Too many of his pages react to remarks and attitudes that are not worth pursuing at length. Indeed, arguing with someone else's views is one of Schickel's primary devices for moving his own book forward. But in quoting strong opinions and then scaling them down with his own objections, Schickel evens out every assertion and the result is bland. (He devotes 15 pages to a compari-

son of Cain's novel with the screenplay written by Chandler and Wilder. A far better account of this three-way relationship, and of the film itself, is Alan Spiegel's "Seeing Triple: Cain, Chandler, and Wilder on *Double Indemnity*," in *Mosaic* 16, no. 1–2.)

Edward Buscombe's book on *Stagecoach* is the fullest of the four: 95 pages of text, pictures, and tables, a map, an ad, a poster reproduction, and a score fragment from a song used in the film. Buscombe's erudition on the Western and the history and culture of the West is simply amazing. The most valuable parts of the *Stagecoach* book have to do with larger perspectives: there are sections or parts of sections on Western costume; on the history of Overland stage travel and its apotheosis in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show; and on the geography, geological development, and Fordian use of Monument Valley. Even discussions peculiar to *Stagecoach* are frequently augmented by such larger perspectives. What Buscombe calls "the ritual confrontation of adversaries in the street," as in the final shootout in *Stagecoach*, is traced to Frederic Remington's drawing "A Fight in the Street" (1896) and to the climax of Owen Wister's novel *The Virginian* (1902); a shot of the stagecoach itself is shown to repeat a shot of horsemen in Ford's *Straight Shooting* (1917).

On the terrain of Buscombe's *Stagecoach*, it might be said, the encyclopedist confronts the text. The book develops a remarkable number of perspectives on *Stagecoach*, but it does not try to bend, marshal, or bring them to bear on the film in an integrated approach or rigorous argument. The result is what *Cahiers du cinéma*, in its 1970 reading of Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln*, called commentary as opposed to reading. What *Cahiers* did not acknowledge is that there are commentaries of many kinds and that their quality varies enormously. Buscombe's is not the kind that sticks closely to the text at hand; it is pertinent to many films in addition to *Stagecoach* and thereby furnishes material for many commentaries—and readings—to come. A minor embarrassment of these riches is that Buscombe seems to have difficulty ending the book. He devotes its last five pages to a review of critics who have considered *Stagecoach* a classic and others who are less certain—as if negotiating the film's classic status has been the object of the book. This ending also downplays Buscombe's own contribution, which has altered and enlarged our sense of *Stagecoach*.

Considered as a publishing event, engaging Salman Rushdie to write on *The Wizard of Oz* is the great coup of the BFI series. If three times 360 books are published, none, one suspects, will rival this. When one actually opens the book, however, what is read arcs beyond expectations like a rainbow.

There is not a page of the book that is not witty, delightfully perceptive, and beautifully written. *The Wizard of Oz* "is a film whose driving force is the inadequacy of adults, even of good adults, and how the weakness of grown-ups forces children to take control of their own destinies and so, ironically, grow up themselves." Rushdie also comments on "one of the most striking aspects of the world-view" of the film—"its joyful and complete secularism." The Wizard is thought to be all-powerful, but "nobody thinks to worship him. This absence of higher values greatly increases the film's charm" and helps it to create "a world in which nothing is deemed more important than the loves, cares, and needs of human beings." These and other factors make *The Wizard of Oz* not only "very definitely a Good Film" that possesses "imaginative truth," but one that could even be called "(reach for your revolvers now) art." It is nevertheless, given the film's half-dozen writers, at least four directors, and five composers, "extremely difficult to say who the artist was." Rushdie concludes, after several pages' discussion:

> The truth is that this great movie, in which the quarrels, sackings, and near-bungles of all concerned produced what seems like pure, effortless somehow inevitable felicity, is as near as dammit to that will-o'-the-wisp of modern critical theory: the authorless text.

One of the book's mainsprings is the contrast between "home," figured in the film as Kansas, and "away." "At the heart of *The Wizard of Oz* is a great tension between these two dreams." As for the dream to which Rushdie adheres, there is, as he says of another matter, no contest: he is for "leaving the grayness and entering the colour." What Judy Garland expresses in her most famous song, "what she embodies with the purity of an archetype, is the human dream of leaving. . . . 'Over the Rainbow' is, or ought to be, the anthem of all the world's migrants, all those who go in search of the place where 'the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true.' It is a celebration of Escape, a grand paean to the Uprooted Self, a hymn—*the* hymn—to Elsewhere."

The tornado is the grayness of the film's Kansas "gathered together and whirled about and unleashed, so to speak, against itself." Dorothy's surname is Gale, "and in many ways Dorothy is the gale blowing through this little corner of nowhere." While the power of men in the film is illusory, Rushdie notes, the power of women is real. He then goes on to contrast the "good" and "bad" witches. "Can there be anyone who'd choose to spend five minutes with Glinda?" he asks. She is "wimpy" and "a trilling pain in the neck"; whereas "Margaret Hamilton's Wicked Witch of the West . . . seizes hold of the film from her very first, green-faced snarl." "It's true," he adds, "that Glinda does exude a sort of raddled motherly safeness . . . but just as feminism has sought to rehabilitate pejorative words such as hag, crone, witch, so the Wicked Witch of the

West could be said to offer the more positive of the two images of powerful womanhood on offer here."

Oblique reference to the terrifying conditions under which Rushdie lives occurs as part of his reading of the film.

> And now I'm doing something strange, something that ought to destroy my love for the movie, but doesn't. Now I am watching a videotape, watching it with a notebook on my lap, a pen in one hand and a remote-control zapper in the other. I am subjecting *The Wizard of Oz* to the indignities of slow-motion, fast-forward and freeze-frame. I am trying to learn the secret of the magic trick. And, yes, I am seeing things I never noticed before. . . .
> . . . But I've changed too, of course. My own relationship with "home" has become, let's say, more problematic of late, for reasons I have little interest in rehearsing here. I won't deny—and will amplify the admission in due course—that I've done a good deal of thinking, these past three years, about the advantages of a good pair of ruby slippers. . . .

Joyce Carol Oates and Norman Mailer love boxing; Hemingway loved bullfighting, Faulkner hunting, and Norman Maclean fly-fishing. It is our good fortune that Salman Rushdie loves movies.

BRIAN HENDERSON

■ Brian Henderson is on the editorial board of *Film Quarterly*.

What Made Pistachio Nuts?

Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic

By Henry Jenkins. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. $32.50.

In 1906 a *Variety* critic captured the essence of a vaudeville actor: "It is his business to do and to do quickly everything which an actor on the regular stage is taught and schooled to avoid." Henry Jenkins brings forth this and a multitude of other useful quotes, observations, and solid research in this engaging study of the early 1930s, when Hollywood and vaudeville combined—not always successfully—their collective talents. Anyone who cares about American film comedy is aware that Hollywood owes a debt to vaudeville. But Jenkins' study is the first full-length investigation of the dimensions and characteristics of that debt.

His thesis is clearly stated. "My central claim will be that anarchistic comedy emerged from the classical Hollywood cinema's attempt to assimilate the vaudeville aesthetic, an alternative set of social and artistic norms that enjoyed an uneasy relationship with dominant film practice in the early 1930s." (24) And to a very large degree, Jenkins fulfills this promise.

He draws upon a wealth of research to describe the emergence of vaudeville within a period sharply divided between, on the one hand, a suspicion of "frivolous" laughter and, on the other, a new mass market for pure laughter. This "New Laughter" is set in a context of a popular desire for joke books, comic strips (beginning in the 1880s), and then vaudeville itself, which Jenkins correctly characterizes as a development of "masculine saloon culture."

The appealing title of this volume describes Jenkins' approach: he works from a number of specific scenes and examples to blend close analysis with period data and an understanding of comic (film and dramatic) theory. Add to these virtues the fact that Jenkins truly *enjoys* his subject, and you have a book that should have wide currency not only in film studies but in American cultural studies as well.

To date, a solid body of film scholarship has built up around the romantic comedy, especially the various shades of screwball comedy (Stanley Cavell's *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*, for instance). But that "other" comedy which embraces silent slapstick, the Marx Brothers, and others has been, as Jenkins notes, poorly understood and little researched. The single most important element of this well-illustrated book is Jenkins' exploration of "anarchistic comedy." It is in this context that his careful description of the vaudeville aesthetic pays off.

He details the importance of the comedian-star-driven act in vaudeville, the importance of the "immediate response" from an audience, of the unfinalizedness of vaudeville texts, which were always "flexible and fluid, open to a process of constant revision and reworking." (75)

The case studies of specific films, such as *Stand Up and Cheer* (Hamilton McFadden, 1934) and *Diplomaniacs* (William A. Seiter, 1933), provide us with a convincing look at how the vaudeville "anarchistic" aesthetic was or was not incorporated into classical Hollywood narratives. In such a spirit, the curious reader will appreciate commentary on Jimmy Durante, a whole chapter on the

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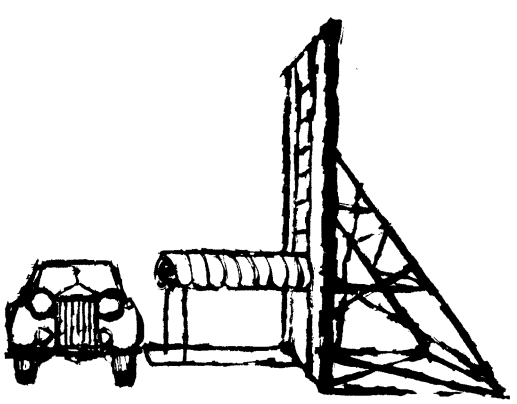
transformation of Eddie Cantor from Jewish cowboy to American Everyman, and one on the silent great forgotten star Sidney Drew. There is also a chapter on "gendered laughter" that puts W. C. Fields in a new perspective: Fields' comedy of marital combat allowed "male spectators to laugh at their own fears, sexual humiliations and economic defeats." (255) And Jenkins does a fine job of showing how Hollywood had to make New York stars popular for provincial towns and cities by downplaying ethnic and city elements (Eddie Cantor, once more, being a prime example).

Criticisms are few but, I feel, worth making. I was surprised that in this significant contribution to the study of anarchistic comedy, no mention is made of Aristophanes and the long tradition of anarchistic comedy which he initiated. And some tie-in with the present should be suggested. Are we, for instance, entering a new phase of anarchistic comedy—with the likes of *Animal House*, Monty Python, and *Wayne's World*—not related to vaudeville but to new anarchistic elements to which, once more, the Hollywood narrative must make its own accommodations?

ANDREW HORTON

■ Andrew Horton teaches at Loyola University in New Orleans.



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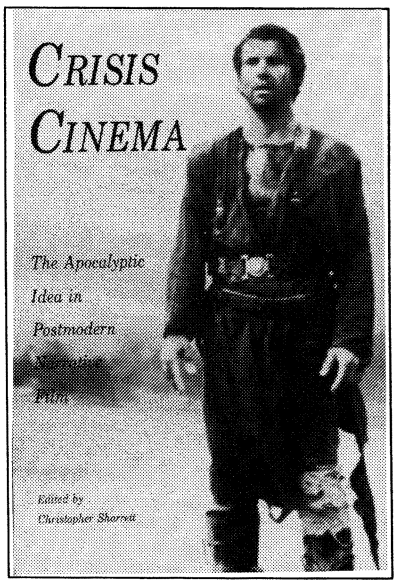

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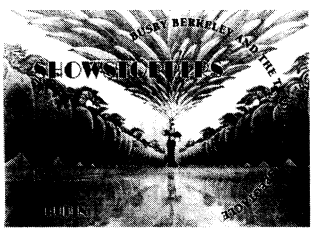

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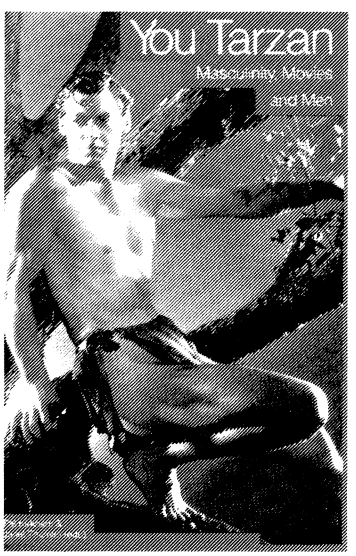

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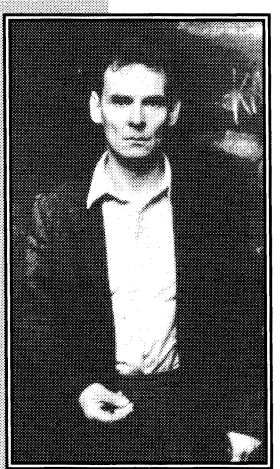

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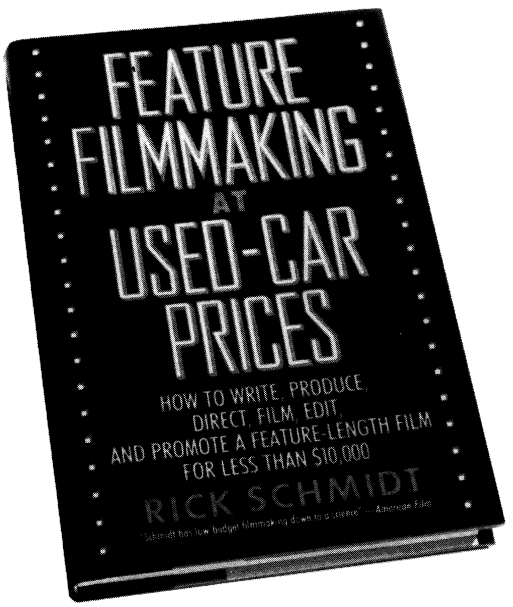

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